

The below excerpts are from various talks and articles by and on Bill Wilson, and were compiled by Jim B. They reveal a wealth of the thinking and insight of the co-founder of A.A. concerning the following topics:

- 1 - The Disease Concept
- 2 - Mental Obsession
- 3 - How Does AA Work?
- 4 - A Continued Existence
- 5 - Early AA 12th Step
- 6 - What Happened to Ebby?
- 7 - Oxford Group Info
- 8 - Agnostics & God
- 9 - Medicine, Religion & AA
- 10 - Origins of the Traditions
- 11 - Still More Traditions Info
- 12 - General Service Conference
- 13 - AA & Other Agencies
- 14 - The 12 Concepts
- 15 - Remembering Our Early Friends
- 16 - Are Alcoholics "Different"?
- 17 - Is It All Bill Wilson's Experience?
- 18 - "A Rapid Growth Problem?"
- 19 - Bill Wilson's Spiritual Experience
- 20 - Early AA
- 21 - Meet AA #3
- 22 - More Big Book Info
- 23 - St. Ignatius & The Steps
- 24 - Father Dowling's Influence
- 25 - More on the Traditions
- 26 - GSO Financing
- 27 - AA Government?
- 28 - Drug Addicts & AA
- 29 - Right of Appeal
- 30 - Are Alcoholics "Neurotic"?
- 31 - What is Alcoholism?
- 32 - Is AA a Religion?
- 33 - What Is AA's Success Rate?
- 34 - Carl Jung's Contribution
- 35 - Ebby's Message to Bill
- 36 - Clergy & AA
- 37 - AA and the Community
- 38 - Short GSO History
- 39 - The Rockefeller Connection
- 40 - The Three Legacies
- 41 - Drunks in AA Meetings?

1Q - How do you justify calling alcoholism an illness, and not a moral responsibility? (The Disease Concept)

1A - Early in A.A.'s history, very natural questions arose among theologians. There was a Mr. Henry Link who had written "The Return to Religion (Macmillan Co., 1937). One day I received a call from him. He stated that he strongly objected to the A.A. position that alcoholism was an illness. This concept, he felt, removed moral responsibility from alcoholics. He had been voicing this complaint about psychiatrists in the American Mercury. And now, he stated, he was about to lambaste A.A. too. Of course, I made haste to point out that we A. A.'s did not use the concept of sickness to absolve our members from moral responsibility. On the contrary, we used the fact of fatal illness to clamp the heaviest kind of moral responsibility on to the sufferer. The further point was made that in his early days of drinking the alcoholic often was no doubt guilty of irresponsibility and gluttony. But once the time of compulsive drinking, veritable lunacy had arrived and he couldn't very well be held accountable for his conduct. He then had a lunacy which condemned him to drink, in spite of all he could do; he had developed a bodily sensitivity to alcohol that guaranteed his final madness and death. When this state of affairs was pointed out to him, he was placed immediately under the heaviest kind of pressure to accept A.A.'s moral and spiritual program of regeneration -namely, our Twelve Steps. Fortunately, Mr. Link was satisfied with this view of the use that we were making of the alcoholic's illness. I

am glad to report that nearly all theologians who have since thought about this matter have also agreed with that early position. While it is most obvious that free will in the matter of alcohol has virtually disappeared in most cases, we A.A. 's do point out that plenty of free will is left in other areas, It certainly takes a large amount of willingness, and a great exertion of the will to accept and practice the A.A. program. It is by this very exertion of the will that the alcoholic corresponds with the grace by which his drinking obsession can be expelled. (N.C.C.A. 'Blue Book', Vol.12, 1960)

2Q - What is meant by mental obsession and the obsessional character of alcoholism?

2A - Well, as I understand it, we are all born with the freedom of choice. The degree of this varies from person to person, and from area to area in our lives. In the case of neurotic people, our instincts take on certain patterns and directions, sometimes so compulsive they cannot be broken by any ordinary effort of the will. The alcoholic's compulsion to drink is like that.

As a smoker, for example, I have a deeply ingrained habit - I'm almost an addict. But I do not think that this habit is an actual obsession. Doubtless it could be broken by an act of my own will. If badly enough hurt, I could in all probability give up tobacco. Should smoking repeatedly land me in Bellevue Hospital, I doubt that I would make the trip many times before quitting. But with my alcoholism, well, that was something else again. No amount of desire to stop, no amount of punishment, could enable me to quit. What was once a habit of drinking became an obsession of drinking - genuine lunacy.

Perhaps a little more should be said about the obsessional character of alcoholism. When our fellowship was about three years old some of us called on Dr. Lawrence Kolb, then Assistant Surgeon General of the United States. He said that our report of progress had given him his first hope for alcoholics in general. Not long before, the U.S. Public Health Department had thought of trying to do something about the alcoholic situation. After a careful survey of the obsessional character of our malady, this had been given up. Indeed, Dr. Koib felt that dope addicts had a far better chance. Accordingly, the government had built a hospital for their treatment at Lexington, Kentucky. But for alcoholics - well, there simply wasn't any use at all, so he thought.

Nevertheless, many people still go on insisting that the alcoholic is not a sick man - that he is simply weak or willful, and sinful. Even today we often hear the remark "That drunk could get well if he wanted to."

There is no doubt, too, that the deeply obsessional character of the alcoholic's drinking is obscured by the fact that drinking is a socially acceptable custom. By contrast, stealing, or let us say shop-lifting, is not. Practically everybody has heard of that form of lunacy known as kleptomania. Oftentimes kleptomaniacs are splendid people in all other respects. Yet they are under an absolute compulsion to steal - just for the kick. A kleptomaniac enters a store pockets a piece of merchandise. He is arrested and lands in the police station. The judge gives him a jail term. He is stigmatized and humiliated. Just like the alcoholic, he swears that never, never will he do this again.

On his release from the jail, he wanders down the street past a department store. Unaccountably he is drawn inside. He sees, for example, a red tin fire truck, a child's toy. He instantly forgets all about his misery in the jail. He begins to rationalize. He says, "Well, this little fire engine is of no real value. The store won't miss it." So he pockets the toy, the store detective collars him, he is right back in the clink. Everybody recognizes this type of stealing as sheer lunacy.

Now, let's compare this behavior with that of an alcoholic. He, too, has landed in jail. He has already lost family and friends. He suffers heavy stigma and guilt. He has been physically tortured by his hangover. Like the kleptomaniac he swears that he will never get into this fix again. Perhaps he actually knows that he is an alcoholic. He may understand just what that means and may be fully aware of what the fearful risk of that first drink is.

Upon his release from jail, the alcoholic behaves just like the kleptomaniac. He passes a bar and at the first temptation may say, "No, I must not go inside there; liquor is not for me." But when he arrives at the next drinking place, he is gripped by a rationalization. Perhaps he says, "Well, one beer won't hurt me. After all, beer isn't liquor." Completely unmindful of his recent miseries, he steps inside. He takes that fatal first drink. The following day, the police have him again. His fellow citizens continue to say that he is weak or willful. Actually he is just as crazy as the kleptomaniac ever was. At this stage, his free will in regard to alcoholism has evaporated. He cannot very well be held accountable for his behavior. (The N.C.C.A. 'Blue Book', Vol. 12, 1960)

3Q - Just how does A.A. work?

3A - I cannot fully answer that question. Many A.A. techniques have been adopted after a ten-year period of trial and error, which has led to some interesting results. But, as laymen, we doubt our own ability to explain them. We can only tell you what we do, and what seems, from our point of view, to happen to us.

At the very outset we should like it made ever so clear that A.A. is a synthetic gadget, as it were, drawing upon the resources of medicine, psychiatry, religion, and our own experience of drinking and recovery. You will search in vain for a single new fundamental. We have merely streamlined old and proven principles of psychiatry and religion into such forms that the alcoholic will accept them. And then we have created a society of his own kind where he can enthusiastically put these very principles to work on himself and other sufferers.

Then too, we have tried hard to capitalize on our one great natural advantage. That advantage is, of course, our personal experience as drinkers who have recovered. How often the doctors and clergymen throw up their hands when, after exhaustive treatment or exhortation, the alcoholic still insists, "But you don't understand me. You never did any serious drinking yourself, so how can you? Neither can you show me many who have recovered."

Now, when one alcoholic who has got well talks to another who hasn't, such objections seldom arise, for the new man sees in a few minutes that he is talking to a kindred spirit, one who understands. Neither can the recovered A.A. member be deceived, for he knows every trick, every rationalization of the drinking game. So the usual barriers go down with a crash. Mutual confidence, that indispensable of all therapy, follows as surely as day does night. And if this absolutely necessary rapport is not forthcoming at once it is almost certain to develop when the new man has met other A. A.s. Someone will, as we say, "click with him."

As soon as that happens we have a good chance of selling our prospect those very essentials which you doctors have so long advocated, and the problem drinker finds our society a congenial place to work them out for himself and his fellow alcoholic. For the first time in years he thinks himself understood and he feels useful; uniquely useful, indeed, as he takes his own turn promoting the recovery of others. No matter what the outer world thinks of him, he knows he can get well, for he stands in the midst of scores of cases worse than his own who have attained the goal. And there are other cases precisely like his own - a pressure of testimony which usually overwhelms him. If he doesn't succumb at once, he will almost surely do so later when Barleycorn builds a still hotter fire under him, thus blocking off all his other carefully planned exits from dilemma. The speaker recalls seventy-five failures during the first three years of A.A. - people we utterly gave up on. During the past seven years sixty-two of these people have returned to us, most of them making good. They tell us they returned because they knew they would die or go mad if they didn't. Having tried everything else within their means and having exhausted their pet rationalizations, they came back and took their medicine. That is why we never need to evangelize alcoholics. If still in their right minds they come back, once they have been well exposed to A.A.

Now to recapitulate, Alcoholics Anonymous has made two major contributions to the programs of psychiatry and religion. These are, it seems to us, the long missing links in the chain of recovery:

1. Our ability, as ex-drinkers, to secure the confidence of the new man - to "build a transmission line into him."
2. The provision of an understanding society of ex-drinkers in which the newcomer can successfully apply the principles of medicine and religion to himself and others.

So far as we A.A.s are concerned, these principles, now used by us every day, seem to be in surprising agreement. (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol. 44, Aug. 15, 1944).

Second Answer

3A - On the surface A.A. is a thing of great simplicity, yet at its core a profound mystery. Great forces surely must have been marshaled to expel obsessions from all these thousands, an obsession which lies at the root of our fourth largest medical problem and which, time out of mind, has claimed its hapless millions. (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol. 50, July 1950).

4Q - How can A.A. best assure its continued existence?

4A - Since the beginning of recorded time, many societies and nations of civilizations have passed in review. In those great ones that have left their mark for good, in contrast with those who have left their mark for evil, there has always been a sense of history, a true and high constant purpose, and there has always been a

sense of destiny.

In the societies which failed to leave a bright mark in the annals of the world, there was always a false or boastful sense of history, always a mistaken or inadequate purpose and always the presumption of an infinite, a glorious and an exclusive destiny.

In the societies that left their mark of goodness on time, the sense of history was not a matter for pride or for glory; it was the substance of the learning of the experience of the past. In the purpose of such a society there was always truth and constancy, but never a supposition that the society had apprehended all of the truth - or the superior truth. And in the sense of destiny there was no conceit, no supposition that a society or nation or culture would last forever and go on to greater glories. But there was always a sense of duty to be fulfilled, whatever destiny the society might be assigned by providence for the betterment of the world.

This is the crossroads at which we in A.A. stand. This is a good time to re-examine how well we have looked upon our A.A. history and how much we have profited by it, what false insights or false glories we may have been extracting from history - to our future detriment. It is a moment to examine the purpose of this Society. Indeed, we are very lucky to be able to state as the nucleus of that purpose a single word: sobriety.

Quite early we saw, however, that sobriety in abstinence from alcohol could never be attained unless there was sobriety and more quietude in the false motivation that underlay our drinking.

When the Twelve Steps were cast up - without any real experience and therefore under some Guidance, surely - we were given keys to sobriety in its wider implications. We have been blessed with a concrete definition of purpose but, for all its concreteness, we could still abuse it and misuse it in a very natural way.

Some times we begin to think that perhaps, according to Scriptural promise, the first shall be last and the last - meaning us - shall really be first. That would indeed be a very dangerous presumption and never should we indulge it. If we do, we shall compete in history with other societies who have been ill-advised enough to suppose that they had a monopoly on truth or were in some way superior to other attempts of men to think and to associate in love and in harmony.

We may look out upon our destiny with no violation of our principle that we are to live one day at a time. We mean that, emotionally, each in his personal life is never to repine upon the past glory too much, in the present, or presume upon the future. We shall attend to the day's business but we shall try to apprehend ever more truth from the lessons of our history, not the lessons of our successes but the lessons of our defections, failures and the awful emotions that can set us loose upon us. For these, indeed, are the raw materials that God has used to forge this still rather little instrument called Alcoholics Anonymous. So we may look at destiny and we may ask ourselves about it and speculate upon it a little - if we do not presume to play God. (G.S.C., 1961)

5Q - When you first sobered up how did you approach alcoholics and did you change that approach?

5A - I took off to cure alcoholics wholesale. It was twinjet propulsion; difficulties meant nothing. The vast conceit of my project never occurred to me. I pressed my assault for six months; my home was filled with alcoholics. Harangues with scores produced not the slightest result. None of them got it. Disappointingly, my friend of the kitchen table, who was sicker than I realized, took little interest in other alcoholics. This fact may have caused his endless backslides later on. For I had found that working with alcoholics had a huge bearing on my own sobriety. But why wouldn't any of my new prospects sober up?

Slowly the bugs came to light. Like a religious crank, I was obsessed with the idea that everybody must have a "spiritual experience" just like mine. I'd forgotten that there were many varieties. So my brother alcoholics just stared incredulously or kidded me about my "hot flash." This had spoiled the potent identification so easy to get with them. I had turned evangelist. Clearly the deal had to be streamlined. What came to me in six minutes might require six months in others. It was to be learned that words are things, that one must be prudent. It was also certain that something ailed the deflationary technique. It definitely lacked wallop. Reasoning that the alcoholic's "hex" or compulsion, must issue from some deep level, it followed that ego deflation must also go deep or else there couldn't be any fundamental release. Apparently religious practice would not touch the alcoholic until his underlying situation was made ready. Fortunately, all the tools were right at hand. You doctors supplied them.

The emphasis was shifted from "sin" to "sickness" - the "fatal malady," alcoholism. We quoted doctors that

alcoholism was more lethal than cancer; that it consisted of an obsession of the mind coupled to increasing body sensitivity. These were our twin ogres of madness and death. We leaned heavily on Dr. Jung's statement of how hopeless the condition could be and then poured that devastating dose into every drunk within range. To modern man science is omnipotent; it is a God. Hence if science could pass a death sentence on a drunk, and we placed that verdict on our alcoholic transmission, it might shatter him completely. Perhaps he would then turn to the God of the theologian, there being no place else to go. Whatever the truth in this device, it certainly had practical merit. Immediately our whole atmosphere changed. Things began to look up. (Amer. J. Psychiat., Vol.106, 1949)

6Q - What happened to your sponsor, Ebby?

6A - It was Ebby who brought me the message that saved my life and uncounted thousands of others.

Because of gratitude and old friendship, my wife Lois and I invited Ebby to live at our home shortly after I sobered up. The son of a well-to-do family in Albany, he had never learned any profession so he was broke and had to begin all over. These were difficult circumstances, naturally. Ebby stayed with us something like a year and a half. Being intent on getting re-established in life, he took little interest in helping other alcoholics. Little by little, he commenced the rationalization we have seen so often. He began to say that if he had the right romance and the right job then things would be okay. At length, he fell by the wayside. He would not mind if I tell this - it is a part of his story today.

For many years, my old friend Ebby was on the wagon and off. Sometimes he could stay sober for a year or more. He tried living with Lois and me for another considerable period but apparently this was of no help. Maybe we actually hindered him. As A.A. began to grow his position became difficult. For a long time things went from bad to worse.

About six years ago the groups down in Texas decided to try their hand. Ebby was shipped non-stop to Dallas and placed in an A.A. drying out place. In these new surroundings in Texas, far from his old failures, he has made a splendid recovery. Excepting for one slip which occurred about a year after his arrival down there he has been bone dry ever since. This is one of the deepest satisfactions that has ever come to me since A.A. started and many another A.A. can say the same. (N.C.C.A. 'Blue Book,' Vol.12, 1960)

7Q - What did A.A. learn from the Oxford Group and why did they leave them?

7A - AA's first step was derived largely from my own physician, Dr. Silkworth, and my sponsor Ebby and his friend, from Dr. Jung of Zurich. I refer to the medical hopelessness of alcoholism - our 'powerlessness' over alcohol.

The rest of the Twelve Steps stem directly from those Oxford Group teachings that applied specifically to us. Of course these teachings were nothing new; we might have obtained them from your own Church. They were, in effect, an examination of conscience, confession, restitution, helpfulness to others, and prayer.

I should acknowledge our great debt to the Oxford Group people. It was fortunate that they laid particular emphasis on spiritual principles that we needed. But in fairness it should also be said that many of their attitudes and practices did not work well at all for us alcoholics. These were rejected one by one and they caused our later withdrawal from this society to a fellowship of our own - today's Alcoholics Anonymous.

Perhaps I should specifically outline why we felt it necessary to part company with them. To begin with, the climate of their undertaking was not well suited to us alcoholics. They were aggressively evangelical, they sought to re-vitalize the Christian message in such a way as to "change the world." Most of us alcoholics had been subjected to pressure of evangelism and we never liked it. The object of saving the world - when it was still very much in doubt if we could save ourselves - seemed better left to other people. By reason of some of its terminology and by exertion of huge pressure, the Oxford Group set a moral stride that was too fast, particularly for our newer alcoholics. They constantly talked of Absolute Purity, Absolute Unselfishness, Absolute Honesty, and Absolute Love. While sound theology must always have its absolute values, the Oxford Groups created the feeling that one should arrive at these destinations in short order, maybe be next Thursday! Perhaps they didn't mean to create such an impression but that was the effect. Sometimes their public "witnessing" was of such a character to cause us to be shy. They also believed that by "converting" prominent people to their beliefs, they would hasten the salvation of many who were less prominent. This attitude could scarcely appeal to the average drunk since he was anything but distinguished.

The Oxford Group also had attitudes and practices which added up to a highly coercive authority. This was exercised by "teams" of older members. They would gather in meditation and receive specific guidance for the life conduct of newcomers. This guidance could cover all possible situations from the most trivial to the most serious. If the directions so obtained were not followed, the enforcement machinery began to operate. It consisted of a sort of coldness and aloofness which made recalcitrants feel they weren't wanted. At one time, for example, a "team" got guidance for me to the effect that I was no longer to work with alcoholics. This I could not accept.

Another example: When I first contacted the Oxford Groups, Catholics were permitted to attend their meetings because they were strictly non-denominational. But after a time the Catholic Church forbade its members to attend and the reason for this seemed a good one. Through the Oxford Group "teams", Catholic Church members were actually receiving specific guidance for their lives; they were often infused with the idea that their Church had become rather horse-and-buggy, and needed to be "changed." Guidance was frequently given that contributions should be made to the Oxford Groups. In a way this amounted to putting Catholics under a separate ecclesiastical jurisdiction. At this time there were few Catholics in our alcoholic groups. Obviously we could not approach any more Catholics under Oxford Group auspices. Therefore this was another, and the basic reason for the withdrawal of our alcoholic crowd from the Oxford Groups notwithstanding our great debt to them. (N.C.C.A. 'Blue Book', Vol. 12, 1960)

Another answer.

7A - The first A.A. group had come into being but we still had no name. Those were the years of flying blind, those ensuing two or three years. A slip in those days was a dreadful calamity. We would look at each other and wonder who might be next. Failure! Failure! Failure was our constant companion.

I returned home from Akron now endowed with a more becoming humility and less preaching and a few people began to come to us, a few in Cleveland and Akron. I had got back into business briefly and again Wall Street collapsed and took me with it as usual. So I set out West to see if there was something I could do in that country. Dr. Bob and I of course had been corresponding but it wasn't until one late fall afternoon in 1937 that I reached his house and sat in his living room. I can recall the scene as though it were yesterday and we got out a pencil and paper and we began to put down the names of those people in Akron, New York and that little sprinkling in Cleveland who had been dry a while and despite the large number of failures it finally burst upon us that forty people had got a real release and had significant dry time behind them. I shall never forget that great and humbling hour of realization. Bob and I saw for the first time that a new light had begun to shine down upon us alcoholics, had begun to shine upon the children of the night.

That realization brought an immense responsibility. Naturally, we thought at once, how shall what we forty know be carried to the millions who don't know? Within gunshot of this house there must be others like us who are thoroughly bothered by this obsession. How shall they know? How is this going to be transmitted?

Up to this time as you must be aware, A.A. was utterly simple. It filled the full measure of simplicity as is since demanded by a lot of people. I guess we old timers all have a nostalgia about those halcyon days of simplicity when thank God there were no founders and no money and there were no meeting places, just parlors. Annie and Lois baking cakes and making coffee for those drunks in the living room. We didn't even have a name! We just called ourselves a bunch of drunks trying to get sober. We were more anonymous than we are now. Yes, it was all very simple. But, here was a new realization, what was the responsibility of the forty men to those who did not know?

Well, I have been in the world of business, a rather hectic world of business, the world of Wall Street. I suspect that I was a good deal of a promoter and a bit of a salesman, rather better than I am here today. So I began to think in business man's terms. We had discovered that the hospitals did not want us drinkers because, we were poor payers and never got well. So, why shouldn't we have our own hospitals and I envisioned a great chain of drunk tanks and hospitals spreading across the land. Probably, I could sell stocks in those and we could damn well eat as well as save drunks.

Then too, Dr. Bob and I recalled that it had been a very tedious and slow business to sober up forty people, it had taken about three years and in those days we old timers had the vainglory to suppose that nobody else could really do this job but us. So we naturally thought in terms of having alcoholic missionaries, no disparagement to missionaries to be sure. In other words, people would be grubstaked for a year or two, moved to Chicago, St. Louis, Frisco and so on and start little centers and meanwhile we would be financing this string of drunk tanks and began to suck them into these places. Yes, we would need missionaries and hospitals! Then came one reflection that did make some sense.

It seemed very clear that what we had already found out should be put on paper. We needed a book, so Dr. Bob called a meeting for the very next night and in that little meeting of a dozen and a half, a historic decision was taken which deeply affected our destiny. It was in the living room of a nonalcoholic friend who let us come there because his living room was bigger than the Smith's parlor and he loved us. I too, remember that day as if it were yesterday.

So, Smithy and I explained this new obligation which depended on us forty. How are we to carry this message to the ones who do not know? I began to wind up my promotion talk about the hospitals and the missionaries and the book and I saw their faces fall and straight away that meeting divided into three significant parts. There was the promoter section of which I was definitely one. There was the section that was indifferent and there was what you might call the orthodox section.

The orthodox section was very vocal and it said with good reason, "Look! Put us into business and we are lost. This works because it is simple, because everybody works at it, because nobody makes anything out of it and because no one has any axe to grind except his sobriety and the other guy's. If you publish a book we will have infinite quarrels about the damn thing. It will get us into business and the clinker of the orthodox section was that our Lord, Himself, had no book.

Well, it was impressive and events proved that the orthodox people were practically right, but, thank God, not fully right. Then there were the indifferent ones who thought, well, if Smitty and Bill think we ought to do these things well its all right with us. So the indifferent ones, plus the promoters out voted the orthodoxy and said "If you want to do these things Bill, you go back to New York where there is a lot of dough and you get the money and then we'll see."

Well, by this time I'm higher than a kite you know. Promoters can stay high on something besides alcohol. I was already taking about the greatest medical development, greatest spiritual development, greatest social development of all time. Think of it, forty drunks. (Chicago, Ill., February 1951)

8Q - What about the alcoholic who says that he cannot possibly believe in God?

8A - A great many of them come to A.A. and they say that they are trapped. By this they mean that we have convinced them that they are fatally ill, yet they cannot accept a belief in God and His grace as a means of recovery. Happily this does not prove to be an impossible dilemma at all. We simply suggest that the newcomers take an easy stance and an open mind; that he proceeds to practice those parts of the Twelve Steps that anyone's common sense would readily recommend. He can certainly admit that he is an alcoholic; that he ought to make a moral inventory; that he ought to discuss his defects with another person; that he should make restitution for harms done; and that he can be helpful to other alcoholics.

We emphasize the 'open mind,' that at least he should admit that there might be a 'Higher Power.' He can certainly admit that he is not God, nor is mankind in general. If he wishes he could place his own dependence upon his own A.A. group. That group is certainly a "Higher Power," so far as recovery from alcoholism is concerned. If these reasonable conditions are met, he then finds himself released from the compulsion to drink; he discovers that his motivations have been changed far out of proportion to anything that could have been achieved by a simple association with us or by any practice of a little more honesty, humility, tolerance, and helpfulness. Little by little he becomes aware that a "Higher Power" is indeed at work. In a matter of months, or at least in a year or two, he is talking freely about God as he understands Him. He has received the gift of God's grace - and he knows it. (N.C.C.A., Blue Book, Vol.12, 1960)

9Q - How do medicine and religion differ in their approach to the alcoholic?

9A - They differ in one respect. When the doctor has shown the alcoholic the underlying difficulties and has prescribed a program of readjustment, he says to him, "Now that you understand what is required for recovery, you should no longer depend on me. You must depend on yourself. You go do it."

Clearly, then, the objective of the doctor is to make the patient self-sufficient and largely, if not wholly, dependent upon himself.

Religion does not attempt this. It says that faith in self is not enough, even for a non-alcoholic. The clergyman says that we shall have to find and depend upon a Higher Power - God. He advises prayer and

frankly recommends an attitude of unwavering reliance upon Him who presides over all. By this means we discover strength much beyond our own resources.

So, the main difference seems to add up to this: Medicine says, know yourself, be strong and you will be able to face life. Religion says, know thyself, ask God for power, and you will become truly free.

In Alcoholics Anonymous the new person may try either method. He sometimes eliminates "the spiritual angle" from the Twelve Steps to recovery and wholly relies upon honesty, tolerance and working with others. But it is interesting to note that faith always comes to those who try this simple approach with an open mind - and in the meantime they stay sober.

If, however, the spiritual content of the Twelve Steps is actively denied, they can seldom remain dry. That is our A.A. experience. We stress the spiritual simply because thousands of us have found we can't do without it. (N.Y. State 3. Med., Vol. 44, Aug. 15, 1944)

10Q - What were the conditions that led to the Twelve Traditions?

10A - After the Jack Alexander article was published in 1941 it brought down a deluge on our little New York office of thousands upon thousands of inquiries from frantic alcoholics, their wives, their employers and at that moment we passed out of our infancy and embarked upon our next phase- the phase of adolescence.

Well, adolescence by definition is a troubled time of young life and we were no exception as groups began to take shape all over the land and these groups immediately had trouble. We made the very sad discovery that just because you sobered up a drunk you haven't made a saint out of him by a long shot. We found that we could be bitterly resentful and we discovered that we had a much better booze cure than we thought possible. A lot of us found that we could gripe like thunder and still stay sober. We found that we were in all sorts of petty struggles for leadership and prestige. A lot of us were very suspicious of the Book enterprise in the hands of that fellow Wilson who has a truck backed up to Mr. Rockefeller who has all the dough. And we began to have all sorts of troubles.

Money had entered the picture - it had to. We had to hire halls that didn't come for nothing, the book cost something, we had dinners once in a while. Yes, money came into it.

Then we found little by little that the groups had to have chores done. Who was going to be the Chairman, would we hand pick him or elect him or what? You know what those troubles were and they became so fearsome that we went through another period of flying blind. The first period of flying blind you remember had to do with whether the individual could be restored into one piece, whether the forces of destruction in him could be contained and subdued. Now, we were beginning to wonder in the early part of our adolescence, whether the destructive forces in our groups would rend us apart and destroy the society. Ah, those were fearsome days.

Our little New York office began to be deluged with mail from these groups, growing up at distances and not in contact with our old centers and they were having these troubles: There were people coming out of the insane asylums. Lord, what would these lunatics do to us? There were prisoners, would we be sandbagged? There were queer people. There were people, believe it or not whose morals were bad and the respectable alcoholics of that time shook their heads and said, "surely these immoral people are going to render us asunder." Little Red Riding Hood and the bad wolves began to abound. Ah yes, could our society last?

It kept growing, more groups, more members. Sometimes the groups divided because the leaders were mad at each other and sometimes they divided because they were just too big. But by a process of fission and sub-division this movement grew and grew and grew. Ten years later it had spread into thirty countries.

Out of that vast welter of experience in our adolescence it began to be evident that we were going to take very different attitudes towards many things than our fellow Americans. We were deeply convinced for example, that the survival of the whole was far more important than the survival of any individual or group of individuals. This was a thing far bigger than any one of us. We began to suspect that once a mass of alcoholics were adhering even halfway to the Twelve Steps, that God could speak in their Group conscience and up out of that Group conscience could come a wisdom greater than any inspired leadership.

In the early days we all had membership rules. Where have they gone now? We're not afraid anymore. We open our arms wide, we say we don't care who you are, what your difficulties are You just need say, "I'm an alcoholic and I'm interested." You declare yourself in. Our membership idea is put exactly in reverse.

Years ago we thought this society should go into research and education, to do everything for drunks all the time. We know better now. We have one sole object in this society, we shoemakers are going to stick to our last and we will carry that message to other alcoholics and leave these other matters to the more competent. We will do one thing supremely well rather than many things badly.

And so our Tradition grew. Our Tradition is not American tradition. Take our public relations policy. Why, in America everything runs on big names, advertising people. We are a country devoted to heroism, it is a beloved tradition and yet this movement in the wisdom of it's Group's soul, knew that this was not for us. So our public relations policy is anonymity at the public level. No advertising of people, principles before personalities. Anonymity has a deep spiritual significance - the greatest protection this movement has.

As our society has grown up it has developed its way of life, it's a way of relating ourselves together, it's way of relating ourselves to these troublesome questions of property, money and prestige and authority and the world at large. The A.A. Tradition developed not because I dictated it but because you people, your experience formed it and I merely set it on paper and tried beginning four years ago (1946) to reflect it back to you. Such were our years of adolescence and before we leave them I must say that a powerful impetus was given the Traditions by the Gentleman who introduced me. (Earl T.)

One day he came down to Bedford Hills after the long form of the Traditions were written out at some length because in the office we were forever having to answer questions about Group troubles so the original Traditions were longer and covered more possibilities of trouble. Earl looked at me rather quizzically and he said "Bill, don't you get it through your thick head that these drunks do not like to read. They will listen for a while but they will not read anything. Now, you want to capsule these Traditions as simply as are the Twelve Steps to Recovery."

So he and I started the capsulizing process, which lasted a day or two and that put the Traditions into their present form. Well, by this time we had a lot of experience on these principles, which we began to think might bind us together in unity for so long as God might need us. And at Cleveland (1950), seven thousand of us did declare "Yes, these are the traditional principles upon which we are willing to stand, upon which we can safely commit ourselves to the future and so we emerged from adolescence. Again, last year we took destiny by the hand. (Transcribed from tape. Chicago, IL, February 1951).

11Q - Have the Traditions been widely accepted?

11A - When they were first written in early 1946 as tentative guides to help us hang together and function, nobody paid any attention except a few "againers" who wrote me and asked what the hell they were about.

Nobody paid the slightest attention but little by little as these Traditions got around we had our clubhouse squabbles, our little rifts, this difficulty and that and it was found that the Traditions indeed did reflect experience and were guiding principles. So they took hold a little more and a little more so that today the average A.A. coming in the door learns at once what they're about, about what kind of an outfit he has really landed in and by what principles his group and A.A. as a whole are governed. (Transcribed from tape, Fort Worth, TX, 1954)

12Q - What will the General Service Conference do?

12A - It will hear the annual reports of the Alcoholic Foundation, the General Office, Grapevine, and Works Publishing and also the report of our certified public accountant. The Conference will fully discuss these reports, offering needed suggestions or resolutions respecting them.

The Trustees will present to the Conference all serious problems of policy or finance confronting A.A. Headquarters, or A.A. as a whole. Following discussions of these, the Conference will offer the Trustees appropriate advice and resolutions.

Special attention will be given to all violations of our Tradition liable to seriously affect A.A. as a whole. The Conference will, if it be deemed wise, publish suitable resolutions deploring such deviations.

Because Conference activities will extend over a three-day weekend, Delegates will be able to exchange views on every conceivable problem. They will become closely acquainted with each other and with our Headquarters people. They will visit the premises of the Foundation, Grapevine and General Office. This

should engender mutual confidence. Guesswork and rumor are to be replaced by first-hand knowledge.

Before the conclusion of each year's Conference, a Committee will be named to render all A.A. members a written report upon the condition of their Headquarters and the state of A.A. generally.

On a Conference Delegates return home, his State or Provincial Committee will, if practical, call a meeting of Group representatives and any others who wish to hear his personal report. The Delegate will get these meetings reaction to his report, and its suggestions respecting problems to be considered at future Conference sessions. The Delegate ought to visit as many of his constituent Groups as possible. They should have direct knowledge of their A.A. Headquarters .(Third Legacy Pamphlet, October 1950).

12A - Through the General Service Conference, A.A. as a whole is now brought into the picture. The Conference is a "huge rotating committee" in whose hands has been placed the responsibility for AA's worldwide services - assistance to the Groups, public relations, preparation and distribution of literature, foreign propagation and other activities. (Bill W. 1st GSC, 1951)

13Q- Could you explain AA's tradition concerning other agencies in the field of alcoholism.

13A - I remember very well when this committee started (January, 1944) It brought me in contact with our great friends at Yale, the courageous Dr. Haggard, the incredible Dr. Jellinek or Bunky as we affectionately know him and Seldon and all those dedicated people.

The question arose, could an AA member get into education or research or what not? Then ensued a fresh and great controversy in AA which was not surprising because you must remember that in this period we were like people on Rickenbacker's raft. Who would dare ever rock us ever so little and precipitate is back in the alcohol sea.

So, frankly, we were afraid and as usual we had the radicals and we had the conservatives and we had moderates on this question of whether A.A. members could go into other enterprises in this field. The conservatives said, "no, let's keep it simple, let's mind our own business." The radicals said, "let 's endorse anything that looks like it will do any good, let the A.A. name be used to raise money and to do whatever it can for the whole field," and the growing body of moderates took the position, "let any A.A. member who feels the call go into these related fields for if we are to do less it would be a very antisocial outlook." So that is where the Tradition finally sat and many were called and many were chosen since that day to go into these related fields which has now got to be so large in their promise that we of Alcoholics Anonymous are getting down to our right size and we are only now realizing that we are only a small part of a great big picture.

We are realizing again, afresh¹ that without our friends, not only could we not have existed in the first place but we could not have grown. We are getting a fresh concept of what our relations with the world and all of these related enterprises should be. In other words, we are growing up. IN fact last year at St. Louis we were bold enough to say that we had come of age and that within Alcoholics Anonymous the main outlines of the basis for recovery, of the basis for unity and of the basis for service or function were already evident.

At St. Louis I made talks upon each of those subjects which largely concerned themselves about what A.A. had done about these things but here we are in a much wider field and I think that the sky is the limit. I think that I can say without any reservation that what this Committee has done with the aid of it's great friends who are now legion as anyone here can see. I think that this Committee has been responsible for making more friends for Alcoholics Anonymous and of doing a wider service in educating the world on the gravity of this malady and what can be done about it than any other single agency.

I'm awfully partial and maybe I'm a little bias because here sits the dean of all our ladies (Marty M.), my close, dear friend. So speaking out of turn as a founder, I want to convey to her in the presence of all of you the best I can say of my great love and affection is thanks.

At the close of things in St. Louis, I remember that I likened A.A. to a cathedral style edifice whose corners now rested on the earth. I remember saying that we can see on its great floor the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and there assembled 150,000 sufferers and their families. We have seen side walls go up, buttressed with the A.A. Tradition and at St. Louis, when the elected Conference took over from the Board of Trustees, the spire of service was put into effect and its beacon light, the beacon light of A.A. shone there beckoning to all the world.

I realized that as I sat here today that that was not a big enough concept, for on the floor of the cathedral of the spirit there should always be written the formula from whatever source for release from alcoholism, whether it be a drug, whether it be the psychiatric art, whether it be the ministrations of this Committee. In other words, we who deal with this problem are all in the same boat, all standing upon the same floor. So let's bring to this floor the total resources that can be brought to bear upon this problem and let us not think of unity just in terms of A.A. Tradition but let us think of unity among all those who work in the field as the kind of unity that befits brotherhood and sisterhood and a kinship in the common suffering. Let us stand together in the spirit of service. If we do these things, only then can we declare ourselves really come of age. And only then, and I think that this is a time not far off. I think we can say that the future, our future, the future of the Committee, of A.A. and of the things that people of good will are trying to do in this field will be completely assured. (Transcribed from tape. Address to The National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. March 30, 1956).

14Q - What purposes do the Twelve Concepts for World Services serve?

14A -"The Concepts to be discussed in the following pages are primarily an interpretation of AA's world service structure. They spell out the traditional practices and the Conference charter principles that relate the component parts of our world structure into a working whole. Our Third Legacy manual is largely a document of procedure. Up to now the Manual tells us how to operate our service structure. But there is considerable lack of detailed information, which would tell us why the structure has developed as it has and why its working parts are related together in the fashion that our Conference and General Service Board charters provide.

"These Twelve Concepts therefore represent an attempt to put on paper the why of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past and the conclusions that we have drawn from it cannot be lost.

"These Concepts are no attempt to freeze our operation against needed change. They only describe the present situation, the forces and principles that have molded it. It is to be remembered that in most respects the Conference charter can be readily amended. This interpretation of the past and present can, however, have a high value for the future. Every oncoming generation of service workers will be eager to change and improve our structure and operations. This is good. No doubt change will be needed. Perhaps unforeseen flaws will emerge. These will have to be remedied.

But along with this very constructive outlook, there will be bound to be still another, a destructive one. We shall always be tempted to throw out the baby with the bathwater. We shall suffer the illusion that change, any plausible change, will necessarily represent progress. When so animated, we may carelessly cast aside the hard won lessons of early experience and so fall back into many of the great errors of the past.

Hence, a prime purpose of these Twelve Concepts is to hold the experience and lessons of the early days constantly before us. This should reduce the chance of hasty and unnecessary change. And if alterations are made that happen to work out badly, then it is hoped that these Twelve Concepts will make a point of safe return." (GSC, 1960)

15(Remembering AA's Early Friends)

Bill never tired of telling the story of A.A.s' beginning and giving thanks for our many early friends. This is how he told it to the General Service Conference in 1952.

You share with me, I know, the thought that the closing hours of this conference bring with them a deep and joyous realization. The realization that at last we are surely on the high road that stretches straight out toward our future, toward, we trust, an everlasting sunrise. We face the sunrise in high hope, with a confidence that is almost awesome and with our hearts full of unspeakable gratitude.

Gratitude to the Father of lights, Who has delivered us out of our bondage, gratitude to friends through whose hearts he has enabled this miracle to be worked, and gratitude for each other.

This too is an hour that will ever stir memory. With me, perhaps more than most, the wellsprings of memory are at flood tide. I think of a psychiatrist at Zurich, Switzerland, who had a patient, an American businessman, treated him a year.

The patient thought greatly of his psychiatrist, none other than the famous Dr. Jung. The patient thought he was well, but leaving the doctor, he soon found himself drunk. So he returned to Dr. Jung, who yet unknowing to this day, is one of the founders of this society. And he said to this patient, "Unless you have a spiritual experience, there is nothing that can be done. You are too much conditioned by alcoholism to be saved in any other way."

Our friend thought it was a hard sentence, but like many of us since, he began to seek such an experience. It found it in the confines of the Oxford Group, an evangelical movement of that time. He sobered at once. There he found the grace to achieve it. It was then called to his attention that a friend of his was about to be committed for alcoholism to an asylum in Vermont. Together with some other "Groupers," he interceded. The result was our beloved Ebby, who first brought the essentials of recovery to me.

Meanwhile, there was a little Jesuit, Ed Dowling, laboring among his flock, lame and relatively obscure, he too, was to light a candle for A.A.

There was a nun, Sister Ignatia, in Akron who was to become the companion of Dr. Bob, who as you know, was the prince of our Twelfth Steppers. She, too, was to light a candle for us.

Even Francis of Assisi holding for the principle of corporate poverty, had lit a candle for A.A. So had William James, the father of modern psychology, whose book, "The Varieties of Religious Experience," had such a profound influence upon us. He had lit a candle for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Then, too, there were to be couriers to all the world. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Fulton Oursler of Liberty, Jack Alexander and the owner of Saturday Evening Post. They were to become couriers. They, too, were to light candles for Alcoholics Anonymous.

But back there in the summer of 1934, the alcoholics of the world felt as hopeless as ever. And yet, as you see, a table was being prepared in the presence of our ancient enemy, John Barleycorn. Candles were already upon it, and meat and drink was there, but the guests had not arrived.

Then came some guests and they partook of the spark that was to become Alcoholics Anonymous was struck. Then ensued our period of flying blind, at the end of which, about 1937 or 1938, we realized that, indeed, a table had been prepared in the presence of our enemy. And that the candles upon that table might one day shine around the world and touch every distant beachhead.

There were more years of travail in that pioneering time which ended in 1941 with the advent of the Post article. Meanwhile, our book of experience had appeared. No longer need we travel in person. The message could be taken through those printed pages to distant ones who suffered.

Our recovery program was really complete. Then came the test whether our growing groups could live and work together, whether the enormous explosive quality of our fellowship would find in our principles of recovery a sufficient containing element. Soon we can to realize little by little that we of Alcoholics Anonymous must hang together or indeed we should hang separately.

And in that sometimes frightening experience, the Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous was forged. And at Cleveland, in 1950, it was confirmed by our fellowship as the traditional platform upon which our society intended to stand.

No body of law was this Tradition. A set of principles infused with the spirit of our 12 steps of recovery and enshrined in the heart of each of us -that would be our protection, we thought, from any blows with which the outside world would assail us, our protection from any temptations to which we might be subjected within.

Such was the Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous.

In this period of infancy and in adolescence this Society discovered that it had to function. This Conference culminates that long process of discovery through which we have learned how we can best act to carry this message to those who suffer. Yes, the advent of this conference in full strength will mark a great day in the annals of Alcoholics Anonymous.

For me, it marks a time when I must shift from activity to reflection and meditation and to the task of acting as your scribbler, to record the experience of these marvelous years just past. I realize that I shall be but a reflector, a scribbler only. I hope the task will be completed, useful and pleasing to you -- and pleasing to God.

My heart is too full to say anymore, excepting au revoir.

16Q - Do alcoholics as a class differ from other people.

16A - Some years ago the doctors began to look at Alcoholics Anonymous and they got about thirty of us together and they said to themselves "Well, now that these fellows are in A.A., and they won't lie so badly, and maybe for the first time we'll get a good look at what the interior of a drunk is like." So a number of us were examined at great length by psychiatrists, and all sorts of tests taken, and the object of this particular inquiry was to see whether alcoholics as a class differed from other people, and if they did, just why and how much.

A number of us were invited to attend the conclave, and a number of learned papers were read, and finally one of these physicians (a very noted one - the meeting took place at the New York Academy of Medicine) began to sum up what he thought the conclusion which they had arrived at was this: that the alcoholic is emotionally on the childish side. That the alcoholic is a person who is more sensitive emotionally than the average person. And then, they ascribed another quality to us - they used the word "grandiosity," they were grandiose (meaning by that that as a type we were what you might call "All of nothing people.") Someone once described it by saying all alcoholics hanker for the moon when perhaps the stars would have done just as well. As a class, we're like that, said the doctors. (Memphis, Tenn., Sept.18-20, 1947)

17Q - Is A.A. based totally on your own experiences?

17A - Let's look. Dr. Bob recovered. Then we two set to work on alcoholics in Akron. Well, again came this tendency to preach, again this feeling that it has to be done in some particular way, again discouragement, so our progress was slow. But little by little we were forced to analyze our experiences and say, "This approach didn't work very well with that fellow. Why not? Let's try to put ourselves in his shoes and stop this preaching and see how he might be approached if we were he." That began to lead us to the idea that A.A. should be no set of fixed ideas, but should be a growing thing, growing out of experience. After a while we began to reflect: "This wonderful blessing that has come to us, from what does it get its origin?" It was a spiritual awakening growing out of adversity. So then we began to look harder for our mistakes, to correct them, to capitalize on our errors. Little by little we began to grow so that there were 5 of us at the end of that first year; at the end of the second year 15; at the end of the third 40; and at the end of the fourth year, 100.

During those first four years most of us had another bad form of intolerance. As we commenced to have a little success, I am afraid our pride got the better of us and it was our tendency to forget about our friends. We were very likely to say, "Well, those doctors didn't do anything for us, and as for these sky pilots, well, they just don't know the score." And we became snobbish and patronizing.

Then we read a book by Dr. Carrell (Man, The Unknown). From that book came an argument which is now a part of our system. Dr. Carrell wrote, in effect; The world is full of analysts. We have tons of ore in the mines and we have all kinds of building materials above ground. Here is a man specializing in this, there is a man specializing in that, and another one in something else. The modern world is full of wonderful analysts and diggers, but there are very few who deliberately synthesize, who bring together different materials, who assemble new things. We are much too shy on synthetic thinking - the kind of thinking that's willing to reach out now here and now there to see if something new cannot be evolved.

On reading that book some of us realized that was just what we had been groping toward. We had been trying to build out of our own experiences. At this point we thought, "Let's reach into other people's experiences. Let's go back to our friends the doctors, let's go back to our friends the preachers, the social workers, all those who have been concerned with us, and again review what they have got above ground and bring that into the synthesis. And let us, where we can, bring them in where they will fit." So our process of trial and error began and at the end of four years, the material was cast in the form of a book known as Alcoholics Anonymous. (Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies, June 1945)

18Q - Wouldn't too rapid growth be bad, both for the new alcoholics and for Alcoholics Anonymous itself?

18A - Some of us used to think so, but several experiences of quick expansion have largely dissipated that fear. We had a striking example at Cleveland, Ohio. In the fall of 1939 Cleveland had, perhaps, 30

members. Most of them had become Alcoholics Anonymous by traveling to the nearby city of Akron where our first group had taken root in the summer of 1935. At this juncture the Cleveland Plain Dealer published a striking and forceful series of articles about us. Placed on the editorial page, these pieces told the people of Cleveland that Alcoholics Anonymous worked; that it cost nothing; that it stood ready to help any alcoholic in town who

really wanted to get well. Cleveland quickly became Alcoholics Anonymous conscious. Hundreds of inquiries by phone and mail descended upon the Plain Dealer and the expectant but nervous members of Alcoholics Anonymous. The rush was so great that new members sober themselves but a week or two, had to be used to instruct the still newer arrivals. Several private hospitals threw open their doors to cope with the emergency and were so please with the result that they have cooperated with us ever since. To the great surprise of everyone, this rapid growth, hectic though it was, did prove very successful. Within 90 days the original group of 30 had expanded to 300; in six months we had about 500; and within two years we had mushroomed to 1200 members distributed among a score of groups in the Cleveland area. Although we have no precise figures, it is probably fair to say that 3 out of 4 who came during that period, and who have since remained with the groups, have recovered from their alcoholism. (Quart. 3. Stud. Alc., Vol.6(2), September 1945)

19Q - Could you describe your spiritual experience for us and your understanding of what happened?

19A - In December 1934, I appeared at Towns Hospital, New York. My old friend, Dr. William Silkworth shook his head. Soon free of my sedation and alcohol I felt horribly depressed. My friend Ebby turned up and although glad to see him, I shrank a little as I feared evangelism, but nothing of the sort happened. After some small talk, I again asked him for his neat little formula for recovery. Quietly and sanely and without the slightest pressure he told me and then he left.

Lying there in conflict, I dropped into the blackest depression I had ever known. Momentarily my prideful depression was crushed. I cried out, "Now I am ready to do anything - anything to receive what my friend Ebby has." Though I certainly didn't expect anything, I did make this frantic appeal, "If there be a God, will He show Himself!" The result was instant, electric beyond description. The place seemed to light up, blinding white. I knew only ecstasy and seemed on a mountain. A great wind blew, enveloping and penetrating me. To me, it was not of air but of Spirit. Blazing, there came the tremendous thought, "you are a free man." Then the ecstasy subsided. Still on the bed, I now found myself in a new world of consciousness which was suffused by a Presence. One with the Universe, a great peace came over me. I thought, "So this is the God of the preachers, this is the great Reality." But soon my so-called reason returned, my modern education took over and I thought I must be crazy and I became terribly frightened.

Dr. Silkworth, a medical saint if ever there was one, came in to hear my trembling account of this phenomenon. After questioning me carefully, he assured me that I was not mad and that perhaps I had undergone a psychic experience which might solve my problem. Skeptical man of science though he then was, this was most kind and astute. If he had of said, "hallucination," I might now be dead. To him I shall ever be eternally grateful.

Good fortune pursued me. Ebby brought me a book entitled "Varieties of Religious Experience" and I devoured it. Written by William James, the psychologist, it suggests that the conversion experience can have objective reality. Conversion does alter motivation and it does semi-automatically enable a person to be and to do the formerly impossible. Significant it was, that marked conversion experience came mostly to individuals who knew complete defeat in a controlling area of life. The book certainly showed variety but whether these experiences were bright or dim, cataclysmic or gradual, theological or intellectual in bearing, such conversions did have a common denominator - they did change utterly defeated people. So declared William James, the father of modern psychology. The shoe fitted and I have tried to wear it ever since.

For drunks, the obvious answer was deflation at depth, and more of it. That seemed plain as a pikestaff. I had been trained as an engineer, so the news of this authoritative psychologist meant everything to me. This eminent scientist of the mind had confirmed everything that Dr. Jung had said, and had extensively documented all he claimed. Thus William James firmed up the foundation on which I and many others had stood all these years. I haven't had a drink of alcohol since 1934. (N.Y. Med. Soc. Alcsm., April 28, 1958)

Another answer.

19A - In December 1934, I appeared at Towns Hospital, New York. My old friend, Dr. William Silkworth shook his head. Soon free of my sedation and alcohol I felt horribly depressed. My friend Ebby turned up

and although glad to see him, I shrank a little as I feared evangelism, but nothing of the sort happened. After some small talk, I again asked him for his neat little formula for recovery. Quietly and sanely and without the slightest pressure he told me and then he left.

Lying there in conflict, I dropped into the blackest depression I had ever known. Momentarily my prideful depression was crushed. I cried out, "Now I am ready to do anything - anything to receive what my friend Ebby has." Though I certainly didn't expect anything, I did make this frantic appeal, "If there be a God, will He show Himself!" The result was instant, electric, beyond description. The place seemed to light up, blinding white. I knew only ecstasy and seemed on a mountain. A great wind blew, enveloping and penetrating me. To me, it was not of air but of Spirit. Blazing, there came the tremendous thought, "you are a free man." Then the ecstasy subsided. Still on the bed, I now found myself in a new world of consciousness which was suffused by a Presence. One with the Universe, a great peace came over me. I thought, "So this is the God of the preachers, this is the great Reality." But soon my so-called reason returned, my modern education took over and I thought I must be crazy and I became terribly frightened.

Dr. Silkworth, a medical saint if ever there was one, came in to hear my trembling account of this phenomenon. After questioning me carefully, he assured me that I was not mad and that perhaps I had undergone a psychic experience which might solve my problem. Skeptical man of science though he then was, this was most kind and astute. If he had of said, "hallucination," I might now be dead. To him I shall ever be eternally grateful.

Good fortune pursued me. Ebby brought me a book entitled "Varieties of Religious Experience" and I devoured it. Written by William James, the psychologist, it suggests that the conversion experience can have objective reality. Conversion does alter motivation and it does semi-automatically enable a person to be and to do the formerly impossible. Significant it was, that marked conversion experience came mostly to individuals who knew complete defeat in a controlling area of life. The book certainly showed variety but whether these experiences were bright or dim, cataclysmic or gradual, theological or intellectual in bearing, such conversions did have a common denominator - they did change utterly defeated people. So declared William James, the father of modern psychology. The shoe fitted and I have tried to wear it ever since.

For drunks, the obvious answer was deflation at depth, and more of it. That seemed plain as a pikestaff. I had been trained as an engineer, so the news of this authoritative psychologist meant everything to me. This eminent scientist of the mind had confirmed everything that Dr. Jung had said, and had extensively documented all he claimed. Thus William James firmed up the foundation on which I and many others had stood all these years. I haven't had a drink of alcohol since 1934. (N.Y. Med. Soc. Alcsm., April 28, 1958)

20Q - Could you tell us about the early days and the meetings in your home on Clinton Street?

20A - In those days we were associated with the Oxford Group and one of its founders was Sam Shoemaker and the Group was meeting in Calvary Church. Our debt to the Oxford Group is simply immense. We might have found these principles elsewhere, but they did give them to us, and I want to again record our underlying gratitude. We also learned from them, so far as alcoholics are concerned, what not to do - something equally important. Father Edward Dowling, a great Jesuit friend of ours, once said to me, "Bill, it isn't what you people put into A.A. that makes it good - it's what you left out." We got both sets of notions from our Oxford Group friends, and it was through them that Ebby had sobered up and became my sponsor, the carrier of this message to me.

We began to go to Oxford Group meetings over in Calvary House, and it was there, fresh out of Towns Hospital, that I made my first pitch, telling about my strange experience, which did not impress the alcoholics who were listening. But something else did impress him. When I began to talk about the nature of this sickness, this malady, he pricked up his ears. He was a professor of chemistry, an agnostic, and he came up and talked afterward. Soon, he was invited over to Clinton Street - our very first customer. We worked very hard with Freddy for three years, but alas, he remained drunk for eleven years afterward. Other people came to us out of those Oxford Group audiences. We began to go down to Calvary Mission, an adjunct of the church in those days, and there we found a bountiful supply of real tough nuts to crack. We began to invite them to Clinton Street, and at this point the Groupers felt that we were over doing the drunk business. It seemed that they had the idea of saving the world and besides they'd had a bad time with us. Sam and his associates, he now laughingly tells me, were very much put out that they gathered a big batch of drunks in Calvary House, hoping for a miracle. They put them upstairs in those nice apartments and had them completely surrounded with sweetness and light but the drunks imported a flock of bottles and one of them pitched a shoe out of the apartment window and it went through a stained-glass window of the church. So

the drunks were not exactly popular when the Wilson's showed up.

At any rate, we began to be with alcoholic all the time, but nothing happened for six months. Like the Groupers, we nursed them. In fact, over in Clinton Street, we developed in the next two or three years something like a boiler factory, a sort of clinic, a hospital, and a free boarding house, from which practically no one issued sober, but we had a pile of experience.

We began to learn the game, and after our withdrawal from the Oxford Group - a year and a half from the time I sobered in 1934 -we began to hold meetings of the few who had sobered up. I suppose that was really the first A.A. meeting. The book had not yet been written. We did not even call it Alcoholics Anonymous; people asked who we were and we said, "Well, we're a nameless bunch of alcoholics." I suppose that use of the word "nameless" sort of led us to the idea of anonymity, which was later clapped on the book at the time it was titled.

There were great doings in Clinton Street. I remember those meetings down in the parlor so well. Our eager discussion, our hopes, our fears - and our fears were very great. When anyone in those days had been sober a few months and slipped, it was a terrific calamity. I'll never forget the day, a year and-a-half after he came to stay with us, that Ebby fell over, and we all said, "Perhaps this is going to happen to all of us." Then, we began to ask ourselves why it was, and some of us pushed on.

At Clinton Street, I did most of the talking, but Lois did most of the work, and the cooking, and the loving of those early folks.

Oh my! The episodes we had there! I was away once on a business trip (I'd briefly got back into business), one of the drunks was sleeping on the lounge in the parlor. Lois woke up in the middle of the night, hearing a great commotion. One of the drunks had gotten a bottle and was drunk; he had also gotten into the kitchen and had drunk a bottle of maple syrup and he had fallen into the coal hod. When Lois opened the door, he asked for a towel to cover up his nakedness. She once led this same gentleman through the streets late at night looking for a doctor, and not finding a doctor, then looking for a drink, because, as he said, he could not fly on one wing!

On one occasion, a pair of them were drunk. We had five, and on another occasion, they were all drunk at the same time! Then there was the time when two of them began to beat each other with two-by-fours down in the basement. Then one night, poor Ebby, after repeated trials and failures, was finally locked out one night, but lo and behold, he appeared anyway. He had come through the coal chute and up the stairs, very much begrimed.

So you see, Clinton Street was a kind of blacksmith shop, in which we were hammering away at these principles. For Lois and me, all roads lead back to Clinton Street. (Manhattan Group, 1955)

21Q - How did you meet A.A. No.3, Bill D?

21A - I was living at Dr. Bob's place and one day he said to me "don't you think that for self-protection that we had better be working with more drunks." I thought it was a good idea and the upshot was that he called City Hospital where he was in some discredit because of his drinking and he got hold of the Head Nurse down there and said to her "a fellow from New York and I have a new cure for alcoholism." Quite kindly the nurse observed, "well doctor, I think that you should try it on yourself." Then she told us that they had a dandy prospect who was strapped down for blackening the eyes of one of the nurses. So doc said, "put him to bed and we'll be down when you get him cleared up a bit and put him in a private room."

So a little while after Dr. Bob and I saw a sight that tens of thousands of us have since beheld and God willing, hundreds of thousands shall see. It was the sight of the man on the bed who did not yet know that he could get well.

Well, as it turned out, the man on the bed was no optimist, like many a drunk since he said, "I'm different, my case is too tough and don't talk to me about religion, I'm already a man of faith. I used to be a Deacon in the Church and I've got faith in God still, but quite obviously He has none in me. Anyhow, come back tomorrow and see me as you fellows interest me as you've been through the mill." Of course we had related our simple formula. Of course we had told him of our release although he was not impressed that mine was only of months and Bob's only of days. He said, "i was sober once that long myself."

We came once more and as we entered his room the man's wife sat at the foot of the bed and she was

saying to her husband, "what has got into you, you seem so different." He said, "here they are, these are the ones who understand, they've been through the mill." He made great haste in explaining how during the night hope had come to him and he had taken there to follow our simple formula. Something else had happened, there was a sense of lightness, a sense of feeling in one piece, a feeling of relief, he said.

The next thing we knew No.3 said to his wife "Fetch my clothes dear, we're going to get up and get out of here." So A.A. No.3 rose from his bed and walked out of that place never to drink again. Well, at that time there was no realization on the part of us what had begun to happen. Of course, that was the beginning of A.A. as we understand it today. The essential process was the same and the grace of God just as everlasting. (Chicago, Il., February 1951)

22Q - Was the writing of the Big Book a difficult job?

22A - As the chapters were done, we went to A.A. meetings in New York with the chapters in the rough. It wasn't like chicken-in-the-rough, the boys didn't eat those chapters up at all. I suddenly discovered that I was in a terrific whirlpool of arguments. I was just the umpire. I finally had to stipulate, "Well boys, over here we have the holy rollers who say we need all the good old-fashioned stuff in the book, and over here you tell me we've got to have a psychological book, and that never cure anybody, and they didn't do very much with us in the missions, so I guess you will have to leave me just to be the umpire. I'll scribble out some roughs here and show them to you and let's get the comments in." So we fought, bled and died our way through one chapter after another. We sent copies out to Akron and they were peddled around and there were terrific hassles about what should go in this book and what should not.

Meanwhile, we set drunks up to write their stories or we had newspaper people to write the stories for them to go in the back of the book. We had an idea that we'd have a text and then we'd have stories all about the drunks who were staying sober. (Transcribed from tape, Fort Worth, Tx., 1954)

23Q - Can the Twelve Steps be compared to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius?

23A - In 1941, I visited St. Louis and Father Ed Dowling met me at the field. This was a blistering day and he had come to bring me to the (Jesuit) Sodality Headquarters. I was struck by the delightful informality. Of course I had never been to such a place before. I had been raised in a small Vermont village, Yankee style. Happily there was no bigotry in my grandfather who raised me but neither was there much religious contact or understanding. So here I was in some kind of a monastery. Even then, believe it or not, I still toyed with the notion that Catholicism was somehow a superstition of the Irish!

Then Father Ed and his Jesuit partners commenced to ask me questions. They wanted to know about the recently published A.A. book and especially about AA's Twelve Steps. To my surprise they had supposed that I must have had a Catholic education. They seemed doubly surprised when I informed them that at the age of eleven I had quit the Congregational Sunday School because my teacher had asked me to sign a temperance pledge. This had been the extent of my religious education.

More questions were asked about AA's Twelve Steps. I explained how a few years earlier some of us had been associated with the Oxford Groups; that we had picked up from these good people the ideas of self-survey, confession, restitution, helpfulness to others and prayer, ideas that we might have got in many other quarters as well. After our withdrawal from the Oxford Groups, these principles and attitudes had been formed into a word-of-mouth program, to which we had added a step of our own to the effect "that we were powerless over alcohol." Our Twelve Steps were the result of my effort to define more sharply and elaborate upon these word-of-mouth principles so that the alcoholic readers would have a more specific program: that there could be no escape from what we deemed to be the essential principles and attitudes. This had been my sole idea in their composition. This enlarged version of our program had been set down rather quickly - perhaps in twenty or thirty minutes - on a night when I had been very badly out of sorts. Why the Steps were written down in the order in which they appear today and just why they were worded as they are, I have no idea.

Following this explanation of mine, my new Jesuit friends pointed to a chart that hung on the wall. They explained that this was a comparison between the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, that, in principle, this correspondence was amazingly exact. I believe they also made the somewhat startling statement that spiritual principles set forth in our Twelve Steps appear in the same order that they do in the Ignatius Exercises.

In my abysmal ignorance, I actually inquired, "Please tell me - who is this fellow Ignatius?"

While of course the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous contain nothing new, there seems no doubt that this singular and exact identification with the Ignatius Exercises has done much to make the close and fruitful relation that we now enjoy with the Church. (The 'Blue Book', Vol.12, 1960)

24Q - How did you meet Father Ed Dowling?

24A - My first unforgettable contact with Father Ed came about in this way. It was early 1940, though late in the winter. Save for old Tom, the fireman we had lately rescued from Rockland Asylum, the club was empty(24th St. clubhouse in N.Y. City where Bill and Lois were living as they had been evicted from their Clinton St. home.) My wife Lois was out somewhere. It had been a hectic day, full of disappointments. I lay upstairs in our room, consumed with self-pity. This had been brought on by one of my characteristic imaginary ulcer attacks. It was a bitter night, frightfully windy. Hail and sleet beat on the tin roof over my head.

Then the front doorbell rang and I heard old Tom toddle off to answer it. A minute later he looked into the doorway of my room, obviously much annoyed. Then he said, "Bill, there is some old damn bum down there from St. Louis, and he wants to see you." Great heavens, I thought, this can't be still another one" Warily and even resentfully, I said to Tom, "Oh well, bring him up, bring him up." Then a strange figure appeared in my bedroom door. He wore a shapeless black hat that somehow reminded me of a cabbage leaf. His coat collar was drawn around his neck, and he leaned heavily on a cane. He was plastered with sleet. Thinking him to be just another drunk, I didn't even get off the bed. Then he unbuttoned his coat and I saw that he was a clergyman.

A moment later I realized with great joy that he was the clergyman who had put that wonderful plug for A.A. into The Queen's Work. My weariness and annoyance instantly evaporated. We talked of many things, not always about serious matters either. Then I began to be aware of one of the most remarkable pair of eyes I have ever seen. And, as we talked on, the room increasingly filled with what seemed to me to be the presence of God which flowed through my new friend. It was one of the most extraordinary experiences that I have ever had. Such was his rare ability to transmit grace. Nor was my experience at all unique. Hundreds of AA's have reported having exactly this experience when in his presence. This was the beginning of one of the deepest and most inspiring friendships that I shall ever know. This was the first meaningful contact that I have ever had with the clergymen of the Catholic faith. (The 'Blue Book', Vol. 12, 1960)

A - Father Edward Dowling, a great Jesuit friend of ours, once said to me, "Bill, it isn't what you people put into Alcoholics Anonymous that makes it so good - it's what you left out." (Transcribed from tape, Manhattan Group, 1955)

25Q - What are the ideas embodied in the Twelve Traditions?

25A - That, touching all matters affecting A.A. unity, our common welfare should come first; that A.A. has no human authority -only God as He may speak in our Group conscience; that our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern; that any alcoholic may become an A.A. member if he says so - we exclude no one; that every A.A. Group may manage its own affairs as it likes, provided surrounding groups are not harmed thereby; that we A.A.'s have but a single aim - the carrying of our message to the alcoholic who still suffers; that in consequence we can not finance, endorse or otherwise lend the name 'Alcoholics Anonymous' to any other enterprise, however worthy; that A .A., as such, ought to remain poor, lest problems of property, management and money divert us from our sole aim; that we ought to be self-supporting, gladly paying our small expenses ourselves; that A.A. should forever remain non-professional, ordinary 12th step work never to be paid for; that, as a Fellowship, we should never be organized but may nevertheless create responsible Service Boards or Committees to insure us better propagation and sponsorship and that these agencies may engage full-time workers for special tasks; that our public relations ought to proceed upon the principle of attraction rather than promotion, it being better to let our friends recommend us; that personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and pictures out to be strictly maintained as our best protection against the temptations of power or personal ambition; and finally, that anonymity before the general public is the spiritual key to all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities, that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all. (Tape - Twelve Traditions, Cleveland, July, 1950)

Another answer.

25A - We sometimes congratulate ourselves on the Traditions as though they were a list of virtues singular to us. Actually, they are a codification of the lessons of our past experience during the early days of A.A.

These Traditions are not fixed absolutely. There may be room for improvement. However, they should not be lightly cast aside, since they bear on our unity, survival and growth under Gods grace."

We are entering a new era of growth with vast forces tearing at the world. The problems and difficulties of the future may be greater than those we have already survived. Still, there is a love among us that passeth all understanding and that will sustain us through all the trials that lie ahead, no matter how formidable."
(Transcribed from tape, GSC, 1968)

26Q - How will the proposed General Service Conference be financed?

26A - How best to finance our Conference is a moot question. The General Service Conference will function for the benefit of A.A. as a whole. Its entire cost ought to be a charge against those "Group contributions" now sent to New York for the support of the General Office. But this method is quite impossible now. Group contributions are not meeting General Office expenses. Nor can the "reserve" or the Foundations A.A. "book income" carry the Conference.

We therefore propose that all A.A. Groups be asked for a gift of \$5 each, yearly, at Christmas. The Foundation Trustees would deposit these sums in a special account marked "Conference Funds."

If even one-half of the A.A. Groups made this annual \$5 gift to the Foundation "for the benefit of the million who don't yet know," we estimate that the resulting income would absorb the total yearly Conference overhead, plus all Delegates' transportation to New York in excess of \$100 each. (Third Legacy Pamphlet, October 1950)

27Q - Why shouldn't the General Service Conference be a government for Alcoholics Anonymous?

27A - Each A.A. Group is autonomous; our only "authority" is a Higher Power. Practically speaking, no A.A. Group will stand for a personal government anyhow; we're built that way. Though the Conference will guide A.A. Headquarters, it must never assume to govern A.A. as a whole. While it can publicly deplore misuse of the A.A. name or departures from Tradition, it ought never attempt punishment or legal restraint of non-conformists - in A.A. or out. That is the road to public controversy and internal disruption. The Conference will give us an example and a guide, but not government. A personal government is something, God willing, that Alcoholics Anonymous will never have. We shall authorize servants to act for us, but not rulers. (Third Legacy Pamphlet, October 1950)

28Q - How many drug addicts are there in A.A. and in the organization similar to A.A. which operates among drug addicts?

28A - We have quite a number of drug addicts who were once alcoholics. So far, I don't know of any case of pure drug addiction that we have been able to approach. In other words, we can no more approach a simon-pure addict than the outsider can usually approach us. We are in exactly the same position with then that the doctor and the clergyman have been in respect to the alcoholic. We just don't talk that fellow's language. He always looks at us and says, "Well, those alcoholics are the scum of the earth and besides, what do they know about addiction?"

Now, however, since we have a good number of addicts who were once alcoholics, those addicts in their turn are making an effort, here and there, to transfer the thing over to the straight addict. In that way we hope the bridge is going to be crossed. There may be a case here and there that has been helped. But in all, I suppose, there may be about 50 cases of real morphine addiction in former alcoholics who have been helped by A.A. Of course we have a great many barbitol users, but we don't consider those people particularly difficult if they really want to do something about it; and particularly if it's associated with liquor. They seem to get out of it after a while. But where you have morphine, or some of those other derivatives,

then it gets very tough. Then you have to have a "dope" talk to a "dope," and I hope that we can some day find a bridge to the addict. (Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies, June 1945)

29Q - What purpose does the right of appeal serve?

29A - There came to this country some hundred years ago a French Baron whose family and himself had been wracked by the French revolution, De Toqueville and he was a worshipful admirer of democracy. And in those day's democracy seemed to be mostly expressed in people's minds by votes of simple majorities. And he was a worshipful admirer of the spirit of democracy as expressed by the power of a majority to govern. But, said de Toqueville, a majority can be ignorant, it can be brutal, it can be tyrannous - and we have seen it. Therefore, unless you most carefully protect a minority, large or small, make sure that minority opinions are voiced, make sure that minorities have unusual rights, you're democracy is never going to work and its spirit will die. This was de Toqueville's prediction and, considering today's times, is it strange that he is not widely read now?

So that is why in this Conference we try to get a unanimous consent while we can; this is why we say the Conference can mandate the Board of Trustees on a two - thirds vote. But we have said more here. We have said that any Delegate, any Trustee, any staff member, any service director - any board, committee or whatever - that wherever there is a minority, it shall always be the right of this minority to file a minority report so that their views are held up clearly. And if in the opinion of any such minority, even a minority of one, if the majority is about to hastily or angrily do something which could be to the detriment of Alcoholics Anonymous, the serious detriment, it is not only their right to file a minority appeal, it is their duty.

So, like de Toqueville, neither you nor I want either the tyranny or the majority, nor the tyranny of the small minority. And steps have been taken here to balance up these relations. (GSC, 1960)

30Q - Are alcoholics neurotic?

30A - It is possible that about half our members, had they not been drinkers, would have appeared in ordinary life to be normal people. The other half would have appeared as more or less pronounced neurotics (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol.44, Aug.1944)

31Q - What is alcoholism?

31A - Alcoholism is a malady; that something is dead wrong with us physically; that our reaction to alcohol has changed; that something has been very wrong with us emotionally; that our alcoholic habit has become an obsession, a obsession which can no longer reckon even with death itself. Once firmly set, one is not able to turn it aside. In other words, a sort of allergy of the body which guarantees that we shall die if we drink, an obsession of the mind which guarantees that we shall go on drinking. Such has been the alcoholic dilemma time out of mind, and it is altogether probable that even those alcoholics who did not wish to go on drinking, not more than five out of one hundred have ever been able to stop before A.A. (Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies, June 1945).

32Q - Is Alcoholics Anonymous a new religion? A competitor of the Church?

32A - If these misgivings had real substance, they would be serious indeed. But, Alcoholics Anonymous cannot in the least be regarded as a new religion. Our Twelve Steps have no theological content, except that which speaks of "God as we understand Him." This means that each individual AA member may define God according to whatever faith or creed he may have. Therefore there isn't the slightest interference with the religious views of any of our membership. The rest of the Twelve Steps define moral attitudes and helpful practices, all of them precisely Christian in character. Therefore, as far as the steps go, the steps are good Christianity, indeed they are good Catholicism, something which Catholic writers have affirmed more than once.

Neither does AA exert the slightest religious authority over its members. No one is compelled to believe anything. No one is compelled to meet membership conditions. No one is obliged to pay anything. Therefore we have no system of authority, spiritual or temporal, that is comparable to or in the least competitive with the Church. At the center of our society we have a Board of Trustees. This body is accountable yearly to a Conference of elected Delegates. These Delegates represent the conscience and desire of AA as regards functional or service matters. Our Tradition contains an emphatic injunction that these Trustees may never

constitute themselves as a government - they are to merely provide certain services that enable AA as a whole to function. The same principles apply at our group and area level.

Dr. Bob, my co-partner, had his own religious views. For whatever they may be worth, I have my own. But both of us have gone heavily on the record to the effect that these personal views and preferences can never under any conditions be injected into the AA program as a working part of it. AA is a sort of spiritual kindergarten, but that is all. Never should it be called a religion. (The 'Blue Book', Vol.12, 1960)

A - Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization; there is no dogma. The one theological proposition is a "Power greater than one's self." Even this concept is forced on no one. The new comer merely immerses himself in our society and tries the program as best he can. Left alone, he will surely report the onset of a transforming experience, call it what he may. Observers once thought A.A. could only appeal to the religiously susceptible. Yet our membership includes a former member of the American Atheist Society and about 20,000 others almost as tough. The dying can become remarkably open-minded. Of course we speak little of conversion nowadays because so many people really dread being God-bitten. But conversion, as broadly described by James, does seem to be our basic process; all other devices are but the foundation. When one alcoholic works with another, he but consolidates and sustains that essential experience. (Amer. J. Psych., Vol. 106, 1949)

33Q - What is the success rate of Alcoholics Anonymous?

33A - Of those sincerely willing to stop drinking about 50 per cent have done so at once, 25 per cent after a few relapses and most of the remainder have improved. (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol. 44, Aug., 1944)

Another answer.

33A - As of 1949 our quantity results are these. The 14 year old society of Alcoholics Anonymous has 80,000 members in about 3,000 groups. We have entered into about 30 foreign countries and U.S. possessions; translations are going forward. By occupation we are an accurate cross section of America. By religious affiliation we are about 40% Catholic; nominal and active Protestants, also many former agnostics, and a sprinkling of Jews comprise the remainder. Ten to 15% are women. Some Negroes are recovering without undue difficulty. Top medical and religious endorsements are almost universal. A.A. membership is pyramiding, chain style, at the rate of 30% a year. During 1949 we expect 20,000 permanent recoveries, at least. Half of them will be medium or mild cases with an average age of 36 - a fairly recent development.

Of alcoholics who stay with us and really try, 50% get sober at once and stay that way, 25% do so after some relapses and the remainder show some improvement. But many problem drinkers do quit A.A. after a brief contact, many, three or four out of five. Some are too psychopathic or damaged. But the majority have powerful rationalizations yet to be broken down. Exactly this does happen, providing they get what A.A. calls a "good exposure," on first contact. Alcohol then burns such a hot fire under them that they are driven back to us, often years later. They tell us that they had to return; it was A.A. or else. Such cases leave us the agreeable impression that half of our original exposures will eventually return, most of them to recover. (Amer. J. Psychiatry Vol. 106, 1949)

Another answer.

33A - About two thousand recoveries now take place each month. Of those alcoholics who wish to get well and are emotionally capable of trying our method, 50 per cent recover immediately, 25 per cent after a few backslides. The remainder are improved if they continue active in A.A. Of the total who approach us, it is probable that only 25 per cent become A.A. members on the first contact. A list of seventy-five of our early failures today discloses that 70 returned to A.A. after one to ten years. We did not bring them back; they came of their own accord. (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol.50, July 1950)

Another answer.

33A - As we gained in size, we also gained in effectiveness. The recovery rate went up. Of all those who really tried A.A., 50 per cent made it at once, 25 per cent finally made it; and the rest, if they stayed with us, were definitely improved. That percentage has since held, even with those who first wrote their stories in the original edition of "Alcoholics Anonymous." In fact, 75 per cent of these finally achieved sobriety. Only 25 per cent died or went mad. Most of those still alive have been sober for an average of twenty years.

In our early days and since, we have found that great numbers of alcoholics approach us and then turn

away - maybe three out of five, today. But we have happily found out that the majority of them later return, provided they are not too psychopathic or too brain damaged. Once they have learned from the lips of other alcoholics that they are beset by an often fatal malady, their further drinking only turns up the screw. Eventually they are forced back into A.A., they must or die. Sometimes this happens years after the first exposure. The ultimate recovery rate in A.A. is therefore a lot higher than we at first thought it could be.

Yet we must humbly reflect that Alcoholics Anonymous has so far made only a scratch upon the total problem of alcoholism. Here in the United States, we have helped to sober up scarcely five per cent of the total alcoholic population of 4,500,000. (N.Y. Med. Society on Alcoholism, 1958)

Another answer.

33A- A.A. members can soberly ask themselves what became of the 600,000 alcoholics who approached the Fellowship during the past thirty years but who did not stay. How much and how often did we fail all these? When we remember that in the 30 years of A.A. existence we have reached less than 10 per cent of all those who might be willing to approach us, we begin to get an idea of the immensity of our task, and of the responsibilities with which we will always be confronted. (G.S.C. 1958).

Another answer.

33A - I took note of the fact that in the generation which has seen A.A. come alive, this period of twenty-five years, a vast procession of the world's drunks have passed in front of us and have gone over the precipice. Based on figures I was careful to get, it looks like, worldwide, there was something like 25 million of them and out of that stream of despair, illness, misery and death -- we fished out just one in a hundred in the last 25 years. I think we're fishing somewhat bigger and better.

Our numbers are considerable. We have size. There is great security in numbers. You can't imagine how it was in the very first two or three years of this thing when nobody was sure that anybody could stay sober...Then we were like the people on Eddie Rickenbacker's raft. Boy, anybody rock that raft, even a little, and he was sure to be clobbered, that's all, and then thrown overboard. But today it's a different story.

Along with greater security in numbers, there has come a certain amount of liability. The more people there are to do a job, it often turns out, the less there are. In other words, what is everybody's business is nobody's business. So size is bound to bring complacency unless we get increasingly aware of what's going on. (Transcribed from tape. GSC, 1960)

34Q - What contribution did Dr. Carl Jung make to A.A.?

34A - Few people know that the first taproot of A.A. hit paydirt some thirty years ago in a physicians office. Dr. Carl Jung, that great pioneer in psychiatry was taking to an alcoholic patient. This is in effect what happened:

The patient, a prominent American businessman, had gone the typical alcoholic route. He had exhausted the possibilities of medicine and psychiatry in the United States and had then come to Dr. Jung as to a court of last resort. Carl Jung had treated him for a year and the patient, whom we shall call Mr. R., felt confident that the hidden springs underneath his compulsion to drink had been discovered and removed. Nevertheless, he found himself intoxicated within a short time after leaving Dr. Jung's care.

Now he was back, in a state of black despair. He asked Dr. Jung what the score was, and he got it. In substance, Dr. Jung said, "For some time after you came here, I continued to believe that you might be one of those rare cases who could make a recovery. But I must now frankly admit that I have never seen a single case recover through the psychiatric art where the neurosis is so severe as yours. Medicine has done all that it can for you, and that's where you stand."

Mr. R's depression deepened. He asked, "Is there no exception, is this really the end of the line for me?"

"Well," replied the doctor, "There are some exceptions, a very few. Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them. In fact, I have been trying to produce some emotional rearrangement within you. With many

types of neurotics, the methods which I employ are successful, but I have never been successful with an alcoholic of your description."

"But," protested the patient, "I'm a religious man, and I still have faith."

To this Dr. Jung replied, "Ordinary religious faith isn't enough. What I'm talking about is a transforming experience, a conversion experience, if you like. I can only recommend that you place yourself in the religious atmosphere of your own choice, that you recognize your own hopelessness, and that you cast yourself upon whatever God you think there is. The lightening of the transforming experience may then strike you. This you must try - it is your only way out." So spoke the great and humble physician.

For the A.A. - to - be, this was a ten strike. Science had pronounced Mr. R. virtually hopeless. Dr. Jung's words had struck him at great depth, producing an immense deflation of his ego. Deflation at depth is today a cornerstone principle of A.A. There in Dr. Jung's office it was first employed on our behalf.

The patient, Mr. R., chose the Oxford Groups of that day as his religious association and atmosphere. Terribly chastened and almost helpless, he began to be active with them. To his intense joy and astonishment, the obsession to drink presently left him.

Returning to America, Mr. R. came upon an old school friend of mine, a chronic alcoholic. This friend - whom we shall call Ebby - was about to be committed to a State Hospital. At this juncture another vital ingredient was added to the synthesis. Mr. R., the alcoholic, began talking to Ebby, also an alcoholic and a kindred sufferer. This made for identification at depth, a second cardinal principle. Over this bridge of identification, Mr. R. passed Dr. Jung's verdict of how hopeless, medically and psychiatrically, most alcoholics were. He then introduced Ebby to the Oxford Groups where my friend promptly sobered up. (N.Y. City Med. Soc. Alcsm., April 28, 1958)

35Q - What effect did Ebby's message have on you?

35A - Well, by this time I knew how hopeless my alcoholism was, and yet I still rebelled - the idea of a dependency on some intangible God who might not even be there. Oh, if I could swallow it, but could I! I went on drinking for a number of days and gradually I got jittery enough to think about the hospital and then it came to me "Of a sudden" one day - "Fool! - why should you question how you're going to get well, why should beggars be choosers? If you had a cancer and you were sure of it and your physician said "This is so malignant that we can't touch it with our art and even if your physician came along with the improbable story that there were many who got over cancer by standing on their head in the public square crying 'Amen' and if he could really make a case that it was so, yes Bill Wilson, if you had cancer, you too would be out in the public square ignominiously standing on your head and crying 'Amen'- anything to stop the growth of those cells and that would be the first priority, and your pride would have to go."

And then I asked myself "Is my case different now? Have I not an allergy of the body; have I not a cancer of the emotions - yes, and maybe I have a cancer of the soul which has resulted in an obsession which condemns me to drink and an increasing tolerance of liquor which condemns me to go mad or die. Yes, I'm going to try this. And then there was one more flicker of obstinacy when I said to myself, "But I don't want any of these evangelical experiences, I mean it will have to be a kind of intellectual religion that I'll get, so just to be sure that I don't go into my emotional tizzy, I believe I'll go up to see dear old Dr. Silkworth and have him dry me out. (Memphis, Tenn., Sept. 18-20, 1947)

Another answer.

35A - What then did happen at that kitchen table? Perhaps this speculation were better left to medicine and religion. I confess I do not know. Possibly conversion will never be fully understood.

My friend's story had generated mixed emotions; I was drawn and revolted by turns. My solitary drinking went on, but I could not forget his visit. Several themes coursed in my mind: First, that his evident state of release was strangely and immensely convincing. Second, that he had been pronounced hopeless by competent medicos. Third, that those old-age precepts, when transmitted by him, had struck me with great power. Fourth, I could not, and would not, go along with any God concept. No conversion nonsense for me. Thus did I ponder. Trying to divert my thoughts, I found it no use. By cords of understanding, suffering, and simple verity, another alcoholic had bound me to him. I shall not break away. (Amer J. Psychiat., Vol.106, 1949)

Another answer.

35A - He first told me his drinking experience, accent on its more recent horrors, Of course his identification with me was immediate, and as it proved, deep and vital indeed. One alcoholic was taking with another as no one except an alcoholic can. Then he offered me his naively simple recovery formula. Not one syllable was new, but somehow it affected me profoundly.

There he sat, recovered. An example of what he preached. You will note that his only dogma was God, which for my benefit he stretched into an accommodating phrase, a Power greater than myself. That was his story. I could take it or leave it. I need feel no obligation to him. Indeed, he observed, I was doing him a favor by listening. Besides it was obvious that he had something more than ordinary "water wagon" sobriety. He looked and acted "released"; repression had not been his answer. Such was the impact of an alcoholic who really knew the score. (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol.50, July 1950)

36Q - Why do clergymen so often fail with alcoholics, when A.A. so often succeeds? Is it possible that the grace of A.A. is superior to that of the Church?

36A - No clergyman, because he does not happen to be a channel of grace to alcoholics, should ever feel that his Church is lacking in grace. No real question of grace is involved at all - it is just a question of who can best transmit God's abundance. It so happens that we who have suffered alcoholism, we, who can identify so deeply with other sufferers, are the ones usually best suited for this particular work. Certainly no clergyman ought to feel any inferiority just because he himself is not an alcoholic. (N.C.C.A., 'Blue Book,' Vol.12,(1960)

Another answer.

36A - I thought the answer to be very simple. The Church has the spirituality, but in the case of drunks, it didn't have the communication to pave the way, one alcoholic to the next, for the Grace to descend. So you have the spirituality, of which we have borrowed, and we have the communication. Therefore we are in no competition at all; we can do together that which we cannot do in separation. (Transcribed from tape. G.S.C. 1960)

Another question, same topic.

36Q - What can ministers do to co-operate with A.A.?

36A - The approach to the alcoholic is everything. I think the preacher could do well if he does as we do. First find out all you can about the case, how the man reacts, whether he wants to get over his drinking or not. You see, it is very difficult to make an impression on a man who still wants to drink. At some point in their drinking career; most alcoholics get punished enough so that they want to stop, but then it's far too late to do it alone.

Sometimes, if the alcoholic can be impressed with the fact that he is a sick man, or a potentially sick man, then, in effect; you raise the bottom up to him instead of allowing him to drop down those extra hard years to reach it. I don't know of any substitute for sympathy and understanding, as much as the outsider can have. No preaching, no moralizing, but the emphasis on the idea that the alcoholic is a sick man.

In other words, the minister might first say to the alcoholic, "Well, all my life I've misunderstood you people, I've taken you people to be immoral by choice and perverse and weak, but now I realize that even if there had been such factors, they really no longer count, now you're a sick man." You might win over the patient by not placing yourself up on a hilltop and looking down on him, but by getting down to some level of understanding that he gets, or partially gets. Then if you can present this thing as a fatal and progressive malady and you can present our group as a group of people who are not seeking to do anything against his will - we merely want to help if he wants to be helped - then sometimes you've laid the groundwork.

I think that clergymen can often do a great deal with the family. You see, we alcoholics are prone to talk too much about ourselves without sufficiently considering the collateral effects. For example, any family, wife and children, who have had to live with an alcoholic 10 or 15 years, are bound to be rather neurotic and distorted themselves. They just can't help it. After all when you expect the old gent to come home on a shutter every night, it's wearing. Children get a distorted point of view; so does the wife. Well if they constantly hear it emphasized that this fellow is a terrible sinner, that he's a rotter, that he's in disgrace, and all that sort of thing, you're not improving the condition of the family at all because, as they become persuaded of it, they get highly intolerant of the alcoholic and that merely generates more intolerance in him.

Therefore, the gulf which must be bridged is widened, and that is why moralizing pushes people, who might have something to offer, further away from the alcoholic. You may say that it shouldn't be so, but it's one of those things that is so. (Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies, June 1945).

37Q - What is AA's relationship with the community?

37A - Now that our methods and results are better known we are receiving splendid cooperation everywhere from clergymen, doctors, employers, editors - in fact, from whole communities. While there is still a well-understood reluctance on the part of city and private hospitals to admit alcoholic patients, we are pleased to report a great improvement in this direction. But we are still very far, in most places, from having anything like adequate hospital accommodations.

Over and above this traditional activity, we may give some counsel to those who work upon various aspects of the total problem. It may be possible that our experience fits us for a special task. Writing of Alcoholics Anonymous, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick once said: "Gothic Cathedral windows are not the sole thing which can be seen from within. Alcoholism is another. All outside views are clouded and unsure." Thus, with our inside view-one best seen by those drinkers who have suffered from alcoholism - we would help those working on alcohol problems who have not had our first hand experience.

While we members of Alcoholics Anonymous are not scientists, our special insight may help science; while we are of all religions and sometimes none, we can assist clergymen; although not educators, we shall, perhaps, aid in clearing away unsure views; not penologists, we do help in prison work; not a business or organization, we nevertheless advise employers; not sociologists, we constantly serve families, friends and communities; not prosecutors or judges, we try to promote understanding and justice; emphatically not doctors, we do minister to the sick. Taking no side on controversial questions, we may sometimes mediate fruitless antagonism, which have so often blocked effective cooperation among those who would solve the riddle of the alcoholic.

These are the activities and aspirations of thousands of the members of Alcoholics Anonymous. While our organization as a whole has but one aim - to help the alcoholic who wishes to recover - there are a few of us, indeed, who as individuals do not wish to meet some of the broader responsibilities for which we may be especially fitted. (Quart. J. Stud. Alc., Vol.6, Sept., 1945).

Another answer.

37A - Many an alcoholic is now sent to A.A. by his own psychiatrist. Relieved of his drinking, he returns to the doctor a far easier subject. Practically every alcoholic's wife has become, to a degree, his possessive mother. Most alcoholic women, if they still have a husband, live with a baffled father. This sometimes spells trouble aplenty. We AA's certainly ought to know! So, gentlemen, here is a big problem right up your alley.

We of A.A. try to be aware that we may never touch but a segment of the total alcohol problem. We try to remember that our growing success may prove to be a heady wine; will you men and women of medicine be our partners; physicians wielding well your invisible scalpels; workers all, in our common cause? We like to think Alcoholics Anonymous a middle ground between medicine and religion, the missing catalyst of a new synthesis. This to the end that millions who still suffer may presently issue from their darkness into the light of day! (Amer. J. Psychiat., Vol. 106, 1949)

Another answer.

37A - Alcoholics Anonymous once stood in no-man's land between medicine and religion. Religionists thought we were unorthodox; medicine thought we were totally unscientific. The last decade brought a great change in this respect. Clerics of every denomination declare that, while A.A. contains no shred of dogma, it has an impeccable spiritual basis, quite acceptable to men of all creeds, even the agnostic himself. You gentlemen of medicine also observe that AA is psychiatrically sound so far as it goes and that A.A. refers all bodily ills of its membership to your profession. Therefore, it is now clear that Alcoholics Anonymous is a synthetic construct which draws upon three sources, namely, medical science, religion and its own particular experience. Withdraw one of these supports and its platform of stability falls to earth as a farmer's three-legged milk stool with one leg chopped off. That you have invited me, an A.A. member, to sit in your councils today is a happy token of that fact, for which our society is deeply grateful.

What, then, has Alcoholics Anonymous contributed as third partner of the recovery synthesis which promises so much to sufferers everywhere? Does Alcoholics Anonymous contain any new principles?

Strictly speaking it does not. A.A. merely relates the alcoholic to the tested truths in a brand new way. He is now able to accept them where he couldn't before. Now he has a concrete program of action and the understanding support of a successful society of his fellows in which he carries that out. In all probability, these are the long-missing links in the recovery chain. (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol. 50, July 1950)

38Q - Why the General Service Conference?

38A - Alcoholics Anonymous, we think, will always need a world center -- some point of reference on the globe where our few but important universal services can focus and then radiate to all who wish to be informed or helped. Such a place will ever be needed to look after our over-all public relations, answer inquiries, foster new Groups and distribute our standard books and publications. We shall also want a place of advice and mediation touching important questions of general policy or A.A. Tradition. We shall require, too, a safe repository for the modest funds we shall use to carry out these simple, but universal purposes.

Of course we must take care that our universal center of service never attempts to discipline or govern. Conversely, we ought to protect our good servants working there from unreasonable demands or political demands of any kind. No personal power, no officials or resounding titles, no politics, no accumulation of money or property, none but vital universal services to Alcoholics Anonymous - that is our ideal. To do without such a Center would be to invite confusion and disunity; to install there a centralized authority would be to encourage political strife and cleavage. Some little organization of our services, securely bound by tradition, we shall surely need - just enough, and of such a character as to permanently forestall any more.

At the center of A.A. we now have the excellent body of custody and service. Our Trustees have gradually come to symbolize the collective conscience of AA, our general office acts in the manner of the heart which receives problems through its veins and pumps out assistance through its myriad arteries, and The Grapevine tries to record the true voice of Alcoholics Anonymous. Such is the happy state of our central affairs that we surely must take pains to preserve and protect, we trust, into a long and useful future.

Therefore, our headquarters problem of the future will, in all probability, consist in guarding and preserving, in its main outlines, what we already have. How then, shall we best keep intact our ideal of service; how shall we avoid national or international politics; how can we best devise against any possible breakdown of the present A.A. Service Headquarters and how shall we give each A.A. in the world a continual assurance that all is well with it; that it continues to perform its tasks effectively, so meriting his warm support, moral and financial?

To these problems of tomorrow many are giving prayerful reflection. A.A.'s are commencing to say what, or who, is going to guarantee the operation of our General Headquarters when the old-timers who inaugurated it have passed off the scene, especially very early ones like Dr. Bob and Bill. Known so well to us from the pioneering period of A.A., these early ones still occupy a unique position. They command a wider confidence and still wield more personal influence than anyone else could again, or for that matter, ever should. Having helped set up our universal Service Center they asked the rest of us to have confidence in it. And we do have that confidence, not that we much know the present Trustees, but because we know Bob and Bill and the other oldsters, in the long future, when these oldsters can no longer assure us, who is going to take their place? Does it not seem clear that the A.A. movement and its Service Center must soon be drawn closer together? Though we know our General Office and our Grapevine fairly well, shouldn't we somehow draw closer to our Trustees? Shouldn't we take steps to allay our feelings of remoteness while the older ones are still around, and there is still time to experiment?" Such are the questions now being asked, and they are good ones.

Perhaps the best suggestion for closing the gap between our Alcoholic Foundation and the A.A. Groups is the idea of creating what we might call the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. (Proposal by Bill W. and Dr. Bob to the Alcoholic Foundation, April, 1947)

Another answer.

38A - Let's face these facts (October 1950). First. Dr. Bob and I are perishable, we can't last forever. Second. The Trustees are almost unknown to the A.A. membership. Third. In future years our Trustees couldn't possibly function without direct guidance from A.A. itself. Somebody must advise them. Somebody, or something must take the place of Dr. Bob and I. Fourth. Alcoholics Anonymous is out of its infancy. Grown up, adult now, it has full right and plain duty to take direct responsibility for its own Headquarters.

Fifth. Clearly then, unless the Foundation is firmly anchored, through State and Provincial representatives, to the movement it serves, a Headquarters breakdown will someday be inevitable. When its old timers vanish, an isolated Foundation couldn't survive one grave mistake or serious controversy. Any storm could blow it down. Its revival wouldn't be simple. Possibly it could never be revived. Still isolated, there would be no means of doing that. Like a fine car without gasoline it would be helpless. Sixth. Another serious flaw; As a whole, the A.A. movement has never faced a grave crisis. But someday it will have to. Human affairs being what they are, we can't expect to remain untouched by the hour of serious trouble. With direct support unavailable, with no reliable cross-section of A.A. opinion, how could our remote Trustees handle a hazardous emergency? This gaping "open end" in our present set-up could positively guarantee a debacle. Confidence in the Foundation would be lost. A .A. 's everywhere would say: "By whose authority do the Trustees speak for us? And how do they know they are right?" With A.A. Service life-lines tangled and severed, what then might happen to the million who don't know. Thousands would continue to suffer or die because we had taken no fore thought, because we had forgotten the virtue of prudence This must not come to pass.

That is why the Trustees, Dr. Bob and I now propose the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. That is why we urgently need your direct help. Our principle services must go on living. We think the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous can be the agency to make that certain. (Third Legacy Pamphlet, October 1950)

39Q - How did the connection between the Rockefeller's and Alcoholics Anonymous develop?

39A - After the meeting in Akron in the Fall of 1937, I went back to New York as we say, all steamed up. I then made the dismal discovery that the very rich who had the money that we needed had not the slightest interest in drunks, they just didn't give a damn. I solicited and I solicited and I became very worried. I even approached the Rockefeller Foundation, you know, I figured John D. would have an interest in alcoholism, sociology, medicine and religion and this should just fit the bill. But no, we didn't fit into any category with the Rockefeller Foundation and they felt a little poor at the time what with the depression. One day I'm in my brother-in-law's office, he a doctor. I was moaning about the stinginess of the rich, our need for money and how it looked like this thing wasn't going to go anywhere. He said, "Have you tried the Rockefeller Foundation." And I told him that I had. "Well," he said, "it might help if you saw Mr. Rockefeller personally." I said, "Dr. Winn, I don't want to seem facetious, but could you recommend me to the Prince of Wales, he might help out too." And then came one of those strange turns of fate, if you like, or providence, if you prefer and the slender thread was this, My brother-in-law the doctor sat there scratching his head and he said, "When I was a young fellow I used to go to school with a girl and I think the girl had a uncle and it seemed to me that his name was Willard Richardson and it seems he was a pretty old guy and he might be dead now but it does seem to me that he had something to do with the Rockefeller charities. Supposing I call the Rockefeller offices and see if he is around and if he would remember me. He called this dear old gentleman on the phone, one of the greatest nonalcoholic friends that A.A. ever had. Immediately he remembered my brother-in-law and said, "Leonard where have you been all these years. I'd love to see you."

Unlike me, my brother-in-law is a man of very few words and he rather tensely explained that he had a relative who was trying to help alcoholics and was making some headway and could we come over to Mr. Rockefeller's offices and talk about it. "Why certainly," said the old man, and soon we were in the presence of this wonderful Christian gentleman who was incredibly one of John D's closest friends. When I saw that I thought that now we are really getting close to the bankroll and the old man asked me a few shrewd questions and I told the yarn so far as it had been spun. Then he said, "Mr. Wilson, would you like to come to lunch with me early next week." Oh boy, would I. Now we were really getting warm. So we had lunch and at the lunch he said, "I know of three or four fellows who would be real interested in this. I'll get a meeting together with them as they are friends or are associated with Mr. Rockefeller and some were recently on a committee, which recently recommended the discontinuance of the prohibition experiment.

So presently, several of us alcoholics, Smitty and a couple from Akron, some of the boys from New York, found ourselves sitting in the company of these friends of Mr. Rockefeller in Mr. Rockefeller's private boardroom. In fact, In fact I was told that I was sitting in a chair that Mr. Rockefeller had sat in only a half-hour before. I though, now we are really getting hot.

Well, we were nonplussed, a little lost for words, so each of us alkies just started telling his story. Our new friends listened with rapt attention and then with reluctance and modesty I brought up the subject of money and at once you see that God has worked through many people to shape our destiny. At once, Mr. Scott who had sat at the head of the table said, "I am deeply impressed and moved by what has been said here

but aren't you boys afraid that if you had money you might create a professional class, aren't you afraid that the management of plants, properties and hospitals would distract you from your purely good will aims." Well, we admitted, we had certainly thought of those difficulties. They had been urged upon us by some of our own members, but we felt that the risk of not doing these things was greater than the risk of doing at least some of them. "At least," we said, "Mr. Scott, this society needs a book in which we can record our experience so that the alcoholics at a distance can know what has happened."

One of the gentlemen said that he would go out to Akron and we kind of steered him that way as the mortgage on the Smith's house was bigger than mine and he went out to Akron and came back with a glowing report which Mr. Richardson placed in front of Mr. Rockefeller. This marked another turning point. After hearing the story and reading the report on Akron Group No.1, Mr. Rockefeller expressed his deep interest and feelings about us. "But Dick," he said, "If we give these fellows real money its going to spoil them and it will change the whole complexion. Maybe you fellows think it needs money and if you do go ahead and get them up some." He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll put a small sum in the Riverside Church treasury and you can draw it out and at least try to help these two men for a while but this thing should be self sustaining. Money, Dick, will spoil it." What a profound realization. God did not work through us but through Mr. Rockefeller whose every interest we had actually claimed from that moment. This man who had devoted his life to giving away money said "not this time." And he never did give us real money, praise God. (Chicago, Ill., February 1951)

40Q - What do the Three Legacies of AA represent?

40A The three legacies of AA - recovery, unity and service in a sense represent three impossibilities, impossibilities that we know became possible, and possibilities that have now borne this unbelievable fruit. Old Fitzmayo, one of the early AA's and I visited the Surgeon General of the United States in the third year of this society and told him of our beginnings. He was a gentle man, Dr. Lawrence Kolb and has since become a great friend of AA. He said, "I wish you well. Even the sobriety of a few is almost a miracle. The government knows that this is one of the greatest health problems but we have considered the recovery of alcoholics so impossible that we have given up and have instead concluded that rehabilitation of narcotic addicts would be the easier lob to tackle."

Such was the devastating impossibility of our situation. Now, what has been brought to bear upon this impossibility that it has become possible? First, the grace of Him who presides over all of us. Next, the cruel lash of John Barleycorn who said. "this you must do, or die." Next, the intervention of God through friends, at first a few and now legion! who opened to us, who in the early days were uncommitted, the whole field of human ideas. morality and religion, from which we could choose.

These have been the wellsprings of the forces and ideas and emotions and spirit which were first fused into our Twelve Steps for recovery. Some of us act well, but no sooner had a few got sober than the old forces began to come into play in us rather frail people. They were fearsome, the old forces, the drive for money, acclaim, prestige.

Would these forces tear us apart? Besides, we came from every walk of life. Early, we had begun to be a cross-section of all men and women, all differently conditioned, all so different and yet happily so alike in our kinship of suffering. Could we hold in unity? To those few who remain who lived in those earlier times when the Traditions were being forged in the school of hard experience on its thousands of anvils, we had our very, very dark moments.

It was sure recovery was in sight, but how could there be recovery for many? Or how could recovery endure if we were to fall into controversy and so into dissolution and decay?

Well, the spirit of the Twelve Steps which have brought us release from one of the grimmest obsessions known -- obviously, this spirit and these principles of retaining grace had to be the fundamentals of our unity. But in order to become fundamental to our unity, these principles had to be spelled out as they applied to the most prominent and the most grievous of our problems.

So, out of experience came the need to apply the spirit of our steps to our lives of working and living together. These were the forces that generated the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

But, we had to have more than cohesion. Even for survival, we had to carry the message and we had to function. In fact, that had become evident in the Twelve Steps themselves for the last one enjoins us to carry

the message. But just how would we carry this message? How would we communicate, we few, with those myriad's who still don't know? And how would this communication be handled? How could we do these things. how could we authorize these things in such a way that in this new, hot focus of effort and ego that we would not again be shattered by the forces that had once ruined our lives?

This was the problem of the Third Legacy. From the vital Twelfth Step call right up through our society to its culmination today. And, again, many of us said: "This can't be done. It's all very well for Bill and Bob and a few friends to set up a Board of Trustees and to provide us with some literature, and look after our public relations and do all of those chores for us that we can't do for ourselves. This is fine, but we can't go any further than that. This is a job for our elders, for our parents. In this direction only, can there be simplicity and security.

And then came the day when it was seen that the parents were both fallible and perishable and Dr. Bob's hour struck and we suddenly realized that this ganglion, this vital nerve center of World Service, would lose its sensation the day the communication between an increasingly unknown Board of Trustees and you was broken. Fresh links would have to be forged. And at that time many of us said: This is impossible, this is too hard. Even in transacting the simplest business, providing the simplest of services, raising the minimum amounts of money, these excitements to us, in this society so bent on survival have been almost too much locally. Look at our club brawls. My God, if we have elections countrywide and Delegates come down here and look at the complexity - thousands of group representatives, hundreds of committeemen, scores of Delegates - my God, when these descend on our parents, the Trustees, what is going to happen then? It won't be simplicity :it can't be. Our experience has spelled it out.

But there was the imperative, the must, and why was there an imperative? Because we had better have some confusion, some politicking, than to have utter collapse of this center.

That was the alternative and that was the uncertain and tenuous ground on which the General Service Conference was called into being.

I venture, in the minds of many and sometimes in mine that the Conference could be symbolized by a great prayer and a faint hope. This was the state of affairs in 1945 to 1950. Then came the day when some of us went up to Boston to watch an assembly elect by two-thirds vote or lot a Delegate. Prior to assembly, I consulted all the local politicians and those very wise Irishmen in Boston said, "we're going to make your prediction Bill, you know us temperamentally, but we're going to say that this thing is going to work." That was the biggest piece of news and one of the mightiest assurances that I had up to this time that there could be any survival for these services.

Well, work it has and we have survived another impossibility. Not only have we survived the impossibility, we have so far transcended it that there can be no return in future years to the old uncertainties, come what perils there may.

Now, as we have seen in this quick review, the spirit of the Twelve Steps was applied in specific terms to our problems of living and working together. This developed the Twelve Traditions. In turn, the Twelve Traditions were applied to this problem of functioning at world levels in harmony and unity. (10th GSC, April, 1960)

41Q - If an alcoholic comes to an A.A. meeting under the influence of alcohol, how do you treat him or handle him during the meeting?

41A - Groups will usually run amuck on that sort of question. At first we are likely to say that we are going to be supermen and save every drunk in town. The fact is that a great many of them just don't want to stop. They come, but they interfere very greatly with the meeting. Then, being still rather intolerant, the group will swing way over in the other direction and say, "No drunks around these meetings." We get forcible and put them out of the meeting, saying, "You're welcome here if your sober." But the general rule in most places is that if a person comes for the first or second time and can sit quietly in the meeting, without creating an uproar, nobody bothers him. On the other hand, if he's a chronic "slipper" and interferes with the meetings, we lead him out gently, or maybe not so gently, on the theory that one man cannot be permitted to hold up the recovery of others. The theory is "the greatest good for the greatest number." (Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies, June 1945)