

CONSCIOUS CONTACT

INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION

VOL 24 NO 11



A God-Made Coincidence

About eight years ago, I was a GSR for early morning groups at a church in Mundelein. There was a group that started a Big Book meeting on Thursday nights and advertised the meeting throughout District 10. That year, both Thanksgiving and Christmas were meeting on Thursdays. I heard that the group decided not to meet on those two days. That worried me because I knew that those were particularly bad days for alcoholics who were visiting from outside the area. I decided to show up at the meeting time both nights in case there were people looking for the meeting. No one appeared on Thanksgiving so I waited a few minutes, read from the Big Book and then went home.

On Christmas, I had planned a family party at my elderly uncle's home in Winnetka. My son and daughter-in-law came in town from Arizona. My ex-wife and another person from my church who had no place to go were also there. My ninety-one-year-old uncle and I were co-hosts for the group of eight. The dinner was over and I said that I would be going to the Mundelein meeting. It was snowing and I was running a little late. I felt I had to be there.

I arrived at the back of the church and found two men waiting there. One was from Detroit and the other from down state. Both were here for the holidays. I opened the door and we all went in. This was a special opportunity for the man from Detroit as he had not been able to do his whole Step 9 and had one person left on his list. The man from down state was that man. When I arrived, the two had talked about their relationship. They had not been in touch for over three years. When it came time for the lead, we opened the book at random. Step 3 was the topic. The man from Detroit said that when working Step 7, he was having trouble. A woman in his group stated that if he was having trouble with Step 7, he had not completely done Step 3. He remembered that as one of the important suggestions early on in his program. I asked him if he knew where he was. He said, "Not really." I said, "The woman you are describing is the minister of this church."

That was one of the best Christmases that I ever had, and certainly an example of a "God-Made Coincidence."

Pete C. Conscious Contact Dec 2004. Rpt. Dec 2024.

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Events

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8TH5:30 P.M.
SERVICE STRUCTURE PRESENTATION & DINNER
ST. GILBERTS CHURCH, GRAYSLAKE, IL
All are welcome!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14TH. 9:00 A.M.
AREA 20 WINTER ASSEMBLY
hosted by D12
LORD OF LIFE CHURCH
40W605 IL-38, ELBURN, IL 60119

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15TH2:00 - 6:00 P.M.
DISTRICT 12 HOLIDAY DINNER
ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
3350 N. DELANY RD., #1343
WAUKEGAN, IL (CORNER OF DELANEY & YORKHOUSE)
Cost \$15.00
Speaker Joe M. (Gurnee)
Food, fun, fellowship, 50/50 raffle
Please bring a dessert to share

Meeting Spotlights

1ST & 3RD SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH
SATURDAY NIGHT SPEAKER MEETING
ROUND LAKE ALANO CLUB
TIME CHANGE TO 7:00 P.M. FOR ALL FUTURE MEETINGS!

NEW DISTRICT 10 ZOOM MEETING INFO
Meeting ID: 362 152 0195
Passcode DISTRICT10

Treatment Meetings

GATEWAY – LAKE VILLA – FRIDAYS
Men @ 7:00-8:00 p.m. Women @ 7:00-8:30 p.m.

ATP – WAUKEGAN – CO-ED
Mondays & Fridays @ 7:30-8:30 p.m.
Saturdays @ 10:00 a.m.

WRS – VERNON HILLS – WOMEN
Thursdays @ 7:30-8:30 p.m.

TREATMENT MONTHLY WORKSHOP
3RD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH. 7:00 P.M.
Meeting ID 994 296 7947.
Password redbook (all lowercase)
Contact Area 20 Treatment Chair,
Kevin A. bbkevin8@gmail.com, 224-201-8978

District 10 Updates

D10 COMMITTEE ELECTIONS WERE HELD ON 10/18. THERE ARE MANY OPEN POSITIONS THAT NEED TO BE FILLED.

PLEASE NOTE: new positions take effect 1/1/25 and new contact information will be reflected in the February newsletter. If you are interested in learning more about a position, please join us at the next D10 meeting.

D10 contributions from 9/21/24-10/26/24 (excluding Fall breakfast & reimbursements): **\$375.85**

REGISTRATION FOR THE 2025 A.A. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION IS OPEN!

LOOKING FOR DISTRICT 10 MEETING MINUTES?
Visit <https://district10nia.org/minutes/>

LOOKING FOR DELEGATE AND/OR AREA 20 COMMITTEE REPORTS, UPDATES AND AGENDAS?
Visit aa-nia.org/delegate/ and aa-nia.org/agendas/

CORRECTIONS MEETINGS ARE HAPPENING AT LAKE COUNTY JAIL. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
Currently have six (6) volunteers between D10 & D12. Monday & Thursday 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. Documents are downloadable via the link at: <https://district10nia.org/committees/corrections-committee/>

“...ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IS NOT, AFTER ALL, A PERSONAL SUCCESS STORY. IT IS INSTEAD THE STORY OF OUR COLOSSAL HUMAN FAILURES NOW CONVERTED INTO THE HAPPIEST KIND OF USEFULNESS BY THAT DIVINE ALCHEMY, THE LIVING GRACE OF GOD.”

Bill Wilson, *A Talk By Bill*, April 1947

The first ever recorded talk can be found here:

[HTTPS://WWW.RECOVERYSPEAKERS.COM/SPEAKERS/ALCOHOLICS-ANONYMOUS/THE-BEST-OF-BILL/BILL-W-S-FIRST-RECORDED-TALK-FROM-LOS-ANGELES-CA-IN-1947/](https://www.recoveryspeakers.com/speakers/alcoholics-anonymous/the-best-of-bill/bill-w-s-first-recorded-talk-from-los-angeles-ca-in-1947/)



Step 12: Beyond Sponsorship

A Journey into Compassionate Action *By Noah W.*

In the A.A. Big Book, Step 12 emphasizes sharing the message of recovery with other alcoholics, often through sponsorship, and practicing spiritual principles in everyday life. It's focused on service within the fellowship, providing a tangible way to maintain sobriety while helping others.

However, *Unpopular Studies in the Last Three Steps* offers a different perspective on page 72: *“Step 12 is concerned with action—specifically the action that arises out of our practice of Steps 10 and 11. We have seen that the purpose of Step 10 is to bring us to the point, moment by moment, where—with increased clarity into what we are thinking and feeling—we acknowledge that we do not of ourselves know what to do, and we do not have the power to do it even if we did know. We have seen that the purpose of Step 11 is to determine what it is that God, as we understand God, wants us to do, and to obtain the power to do it. And now we are at Step 12: We do it.”*

This interpretation of Step 12 has brought about a powerful shift in my understanding. Unlike the Big Book's emphasis on sponsorship, this approach removes the need to rely on my thoughts and feelings to dictate my actions. Instead, I focus on the guidance I've gained from Steps 10 and 11, letting that clarity guide what I do. This has been incredibly useful in my life, bringing me a sense of peace in my day-to-day interactions. By aligning my actions with God's will, I'm less reactive to emotions and more centered in compassionate, purposeful behavior. For me, this broader way of working Step 12 has added depth and serenity to my recovery.

Step 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Tradition 12 Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Concept 12 The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government; that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

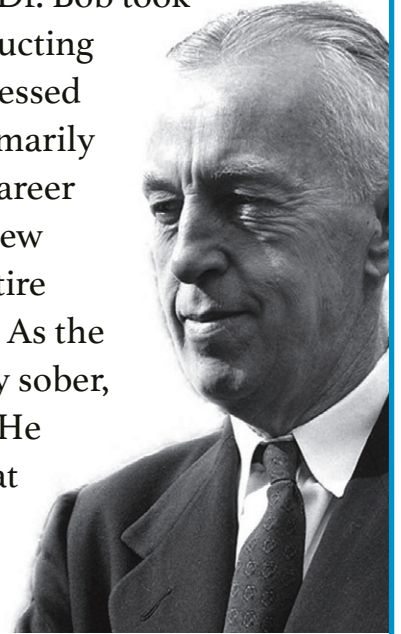
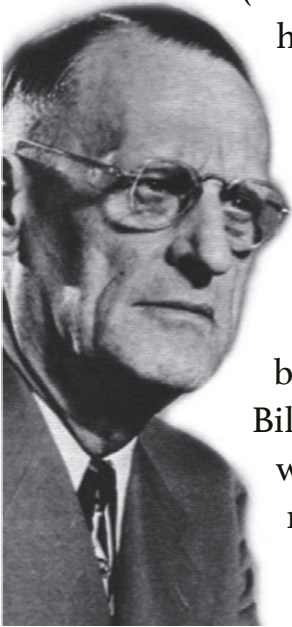
A Short History of A.A.

THROUGH THE LENS OF HANK K. (DOC)

It's been said many times that history is important. Perhaps that's true of alcoholics, too. The newcomer to the program hears phrases and words that don't mean anything to them, yet A.A. is full of jargon, some of which also crept into everyday speech. Unlike many groups that started with a couple of guys, A.A. has continued since 1935 for reasons linked to its history. So, here follows a short version of that history.

Alcoholics Anonymous (not the name initially given to the group) was founded in 1935 in Akron, Ohio by two men: **Dr. Robert Smith** (Dr. Bob, a gastroenterologist), and **Bill Wilson**

(Bill W.). The date of A.A.'s founding is the day on which Dr. Bob took his last drink – a beer to steady his hands prior to conducting another surgery on June 10th, 1935. Bill was a man obsessed with making money and worked on Wall Street – primarily in asset stripping (corporate raider) – although his career was wrecked by heavy drinking. While he lived in New York, Bill was in Akron (then a capital of the rubber tire industry) to try to buy and breakup a failing company. As the business trip was unsuccessful and he was trying to stay sober, Bill made many calls to find another alcoholic to talk to. He was given Dr. Bob's number. Dr. Bob agreed – somewhat reluctantly – to talk for a few minutes at his home and the conversation went on for six hours. Bill moved into Bob and his wife's home.



At the time of their first meeting, it was post-Prohibition America and alcoholism was considered a moral failing, not a disease. Treatment required money and those without funds went to a state hospital, the Salvation Army, or other charitable or religious groups for treatment.

Bill had tried many treatments for his battle with alcohol, including medical (**Dr. Silkworth**) and religious (the Oxford Group). Dr. Silkworth treated Bob and explained that alcoholism was an illness, not a moral failing or lack of willpower. Bill's friend **Rowland Hazard**, an alcoholic businessman, tried a psychological cure with Dr. Karl Jung, twice, without success and then found the Oxford Group.

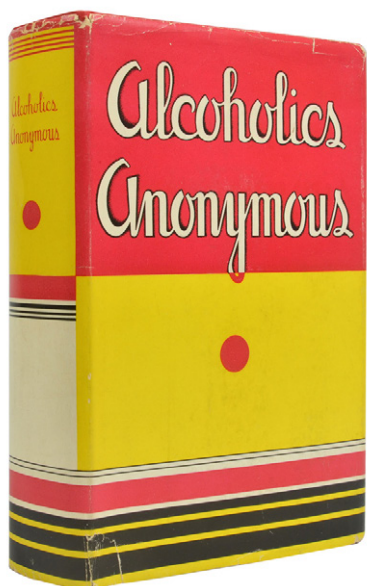
The Oxford Group was a religious group founded in 1921 by **Frank Buchman**, a minister as the First Century Christian Fellowship, and was renamed to the Oxford Group by 1931. This group practiced the Five Cs: confidence, confession, conviction, conversion, and continuance; it followed the Four Absolutes (taken from the Sermon on the Mount): honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love.

This likely instilled in Bill the need for rules and traditions, which he later wrote as the core principles of A.A. Bill's friend **Ebby Thacher** found religion, introduced by mutual friend Hazard, and thus stayed sober. Ebby told Bill to "choose your own conception of God." As Bill struggled with the concept of God, this helped him, probably resulting in the concept of a Higher Power. Bill tried the Belladonna Cure (atropine and scopolamine) which likely resulted in the

sensation of a bright light, a feeling of ecstasy, and a new sense of serenity. Bill stayed sober and went on a crusade to save other alcoholics. Dr. Silkworth urged Bill to play down the “Hot Flash” conversion and advised him that there was a need to deflate the ego of the alcoholic, suggesting that one alcoholic talking to another would break down the ego.

While living with Dr. Bob, Bill joined in with the Oxford Group morning sessions of meditations and Bible readings. The Book of James in the New Testament was an inspiration to Bob and the other alcoholics in Akron, as was the Sermon on the Mount and Paul’s chapter on love (1 Corinthians 13), which underpins these concepts appearing in A.A. The Akron chapter was referred to by the old timers as the James Club. Bill and Bob wanted to develop a program that empathized with alcoholics, yet convinced them of their hopelessness and powerlessness. They must surrender to a Higher Power and work with another alcoholic. They wanted to emphasize that it was possible to enjoy life without alcohol. They decided it was first necessary to determine if the person had a drinking problem, then get each person to surrender by a confession of powerlessness and belief in a Higher Power that could restore them to sanity. Two realizations came from this initial planning: 1) An alcoholic needs another alcoholic, and 2) The concept of 24 hours, to resist the urge to drink by postponing it one day, one hour, or even one minute.

Bill moved back to New York and started an Oxford Group (OG) for alcoholics there, even hosting alcoholics in his home until 1936 when one man tried to rape his wife and another gassed himself. Two programs existed initially: The Akron OG and New York OG. Bill held meetings only for alcoholics, while Dr. Bob held general OG meetings and did not seek out other alcoholics. Bill and his wife, Lois, quit or were booted out of the OG in 1937. The Akron group split with OG in 1939 in sympathy with their brothers in New York. However, while Bill split from the OG, he took many of their teachings with him, although not the concept that alcoholism could be cured. In late 1937, Bill returned to Akron and Bill and Bob estimated the success rate of A.A. as being 5% with some 40 men of 800 treated. Bill had planned a massive program publishing a book or books, paid missionaries, and opening of alcoholic treatment centers, which he presented to the Akron group. By a single vote margin, the Akron group agreed to the book, but nothing further financially. The Big Book, entitled Alcoholics Anonymous, was first published in 1939. Bill and Bob went to see John D. Rockefeller, the billionaire, for money, hoping to fund a massive program. Instead, they received \$5,000 in \$30 weekly installments for Bill and Bob’s expenses. At a dinner (a fundraising event, Bill hoped), Nelson Rockefeller declared that A.A. should be financially self-supporting. John D. Rockefeller stated that money would ruin everything. That meant A.A. was self-supporting and refused outside contributions, other than the weekly stipends for the founders.



The A.A. Program was shared by word of mouth initially. The basic tenets of the program were from Oxford Group principles, Dr. Silkworth, and an early 1900s psychologist William James who stated that “the only cure for dipsomania comes from religiomania.” Maslov’s hierarchy of needs also was accounted for in the program, as meetings provided some food, coffee, and a warm place for an hour or so, as well as some fundamental social needs. The founders started with six basic steps. Bill Wilson went on to write twelve steps one night in bed. He thought of the Twelve Apostles and decided twelve was the right number. The Twelve Traditions were published in 1953, following formal adoption by A.A. in 1950. The success rate for the program cannot be determined, as no formal membership is recorded. However, why it works for those who work the program is not a mystery. An old program, whose language and writings might stand for some modernization, still has basic tenets that work today.



Dr. Silkworth



Rowland Hazard



Frank Buchman



Ebby Thacher

6 The Illusion of Control

STEP 1 IS A VITAL STEP OF A.A. RECOVERY. IT IS THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE ENTIRE PROGRAM IS BUILT AND MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE ROAD TO A BETTER LIFE. WHILE TAKING THIS STEP CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR SOME, IT'S AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE A.A. PROGRAM. THE REMAINDER OF THE STEPS HINGE ON THIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND SURRENDER — SOMETHING I ONLY CONSIDERED WHEN ALL OTHER OPTIONS FAILED.

The Big Book tells us, “If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic.” It would have been nice if I knew this years ago! Instead, I spent years trying to exert my will over my drinking to no avail. The mind of an alcoholic is a funny thing. Maybe “funny” is the wrong word. In any case, I would reach a tipping point almost daily. The only thing I could “manage” to do was convince myself that I made too big a deal out of nothing, thus giving myself the pass to continue to drink.

When I first started taking the steps, I wasn't entirely convinced that my life was unmanageable. I was, however, convinced I was powerless over when I drank and how much. It wasn't until I spoke with another alcoholic that I discovered the unmanageability of my life as I was living it. The illusion that I had managed things just fine because I had a family, a house and a job was just that: an illusion. I oriented my entire life around getting alcohol, drinking alcohol and disposing of empty bottles. I left family parties, my kid's sporting events and movie nights to go to the liquor store and sit in my car somewhere. I lied to my spouse, child, family and employer...every single day. I lied to myself. I saw myself as who I was capable of being if I didn't drink, not who I actually was and how I was living my life. If this warrants a life, then I suppose I was managing just fine; but, if life is more than drinking and pretending to be someone I wasn't... I was failing terribly. This illusion kept me drunk for quite some time.

Maybe many people know they are real alcoholics and just don't know how to stop. I knew I couldn't control my drinking, but I attributed it to other things...being an alcoholic was not one of them. I even knew that lack of power was my dilemma... I just thought it was my failing. I can't fully articulate how powerful and eye-opening it was to pour my truth out to another alcoholic and have them understand. Or, to read The Doctor's Opinion and think: THIS IS ME. I knew what was wrong with me and I was being told that there is a solution. I felt hopeful for the first time in many years.

To say I was miserable is the understatement of the year. I was looking for a way out, but too cowardly or proud - or who knows what - to end it all. Certainly I was rapidly approaching the end...whether it be by my hand or the bottle's. Once I could see my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my drinking (and faux life), moving forward with the steps was a no-brainer. I suppose I was miserable enough to do what was suggested by people who had solved the drink problem. Though I had no power over my drinking, there was a sufficient substitute. A.A. members told me that the program was designed to help me surrender so that I could access a Higher Power that would solve my drink problem. I believed them.

They were right. I am happy, joyous and free thanks to this divinely inspired program and God.

Anonymous

Step 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Concept I Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

Tradition 1 Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

If We Wished to Grow

By Laura W.

*If we wished to grow, we had to begin
somewhere.
It all began with a man, chained to a bottle of
loneliness & despair.
Job after job lost, and opportunities passed
him by.
Maintaining a daily drink followed by 20 more
he could not deny.*

*Knuckles as white as snow, fantasizing about
the earth below, he couldn't stay dry.
A high resolve would evolve, night after night,
with a drink to follow & a large sigh.
Educated on the alcoholic decline of his frail
body & mind, he finally became aware
A medicated gin-soaked bender, the insanity
of an impending calamity, led him to seek
medical care.*

*New ideals of religion, brought on a decision,
that an old friend brought to light
A belief in God, now didn't seem as odd, as
growth was in sight.
Confronting his evils, apologies poured out
from the depths of his soul
Forgiveness, honesty, humility & willingness
started to make him feel whole*

*Proceeded by peace & serenity, which became
his identity, accepting a power greater than he.
At once he spread the word, to like-minded
others who suffered to the nth degree
A fellowship soon developed, and slates were
wiped clean
A diseased smoke screen of deception became
the catalyst for his resurrection, of an
existence so serene.*

The Glum Lot



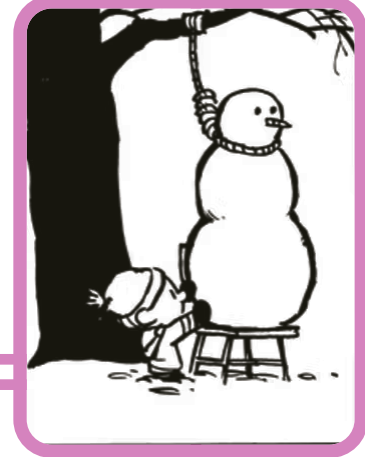
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A ROTTWEILER AND AN ALCOHOLIC?

A rottweiler knows it has to let go eventually.



YOU ENTER A CHURCH BASEMENT WHERE THERE'S SIMULTANEOUS A.A. AND AL-ANON MEETINGS. YOU COME TO TWO DOORS. HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHICH DOOR TO ENTER?

Behind one door, you hear laughter; behind the other, crying.



ALCOHOLIC:

It's not how many times you fall, it's how many times you get back up.

POLICE OFFICER:

Sir, that's now how a field sobriety test works.



OPEN - Volunteer needed! Learn more about the positions/commitment of the answering District representatives by contacting a district committee member listed above.

I AM RESPONSIBLE, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that:
I AM RESPONSIBLE.

NEXT DISTRICT MEETING
SUNDAY, JANUARY 26TH
ST. GILBERT CATHOLIC CHURCH GRAYSLAKE, IL
5:30 P.M. TRADITIONS MTC 6:00 P.M. HYBRID MTC

CONTENT DEADLINE FRIDAY, JANUARY 17.
Any A.A. may contribute. **1.** Gotodistrict10nia.org. **2.** Click "District Services and Committees", then "Newsletter". **3.** Provide name, email or phone, in case of questions. **4.** Type/Paste your content. Click "Select". That's it! **WEBSITES** www.district10nia.org www.aa-nia.org www.aa.org www.aagrapevine.org
DISTRICT 10 P.O. Box 854, Libertyville, IL 60048 **NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA 20** P.O. Box 808, Streamwood, IL 60107
GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE James A. Farley Station, P.O. Box 2407 New York, NY 10163 aa.org/aa-contributions-self-support
Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of A.A., NIA, District 10 or Conscious Contact volunteers.

877-893-1212
DISTRICT 10 ANSWERING SERVICE

LOOKING FOR LIGHT YET MEANINGFUL SERVICE WORK? BE AN ANSWERING SERVICE VOLUNTEER! SEE ABOVE!