



# GOOD NEWS



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## AA HISTORY—PART 4

# AA Is Brought to the World By Bob & Bill

*This is the fourth article of a continuing series on the founders and founding of AA and the 12-Step program. We left Bill W. in Akron, Ohio, sober some months and waiting to meet Dr. Bob, who was passed out drunk and unavailable until the following day.*

By J. S. RUDOLF

Dr. Bob was not enthusiastic about going to meet Bill Wilson, the reformed drunk from New York City, but Anne promised that he didn't have to stay more than 15 minutes. The two men, so dissimilar in personality and pasts, had in common their alcoholism and their exposure to the Oxford Group. They talked for hours. Bob stopped drinking.

Bill stayed in Akron and eventually moved in with the Smiths as their houseguest. Both friendship and sobriety seemed well cemented when Dr. Bob set off by himself for the annual American Medical Association convention in Atlantic City in June of 1935. But then, oddly, for five days there was no word from Atlantic City.

Dr. Bob had begun drinking on the train, drank his way through the convention, drank his way back, called his office nurse to collect him from the train station and remembered little of the trip. He had to perform an operation in three days.

Bill and Anne nursed him through withdrawal and sent him off, hands still shaking, to the hospital on the day of the  
*(See "Bob and Bill," Page 2)*

## **Don't Delay— Conference Is March 10-12**

The 42nd Annual Spring Conference of NCCAA begins Friday, March 10 at the Fresno Convention Center, 700 "M" Street. Flyers are available at most meetings and all Central Offices. Get yours in today.

# **42nd Annual NCCAA SPRING CONFERENCE**

**FRIDAY THROUGH SUNDAY  
MARCH 10-12, 1989**

**FRESNO CONVENTION CENTER  
700 M Street, Fresno, California**

**REGISTRATION: \$3.00**

*Flyers and Registration Forms Available  
at Central Offices and Most Meetings.*

## Bob and Bill Bring an Idea Whose Time Had Come

(Continued from Page 1)  
scheduled surgery. They waited, fearfully, through the morning, noon, afternoon, without word from the hospital or Bob.

The phone call that finally came in the late afternoon marks a beginning for AA itself: Not only had the operation gone well, but then Dr. Bob had gone to all those whom he'd hurt or shortchanged in the past, explaining about his alcoholism and promising to pay old debts, to make amends.

### NEITHER EVER DRANK AGAIN

It was June 10, 1935. Neither Bill nor Bob ever drank again, and from this time they worked to bring others into recovery with them. Lois came to Akron to meet the Smiths, and the families became good friends. Lois felt that Bob was one of the very few "buddies" that Bill ever had.

The program that was born out of that friendship slowly

evolved—out of necessity, out of trial and error, out of experience and common sense. The first obvious principle was that an alcoholic had to share his sobriety or he risked losing it. Pass the program on!

At first, unchanneled enthusiasm gave the saving-drunks crusade something of the ambivalence of the Keystone Cops. The reformers arranged interventions, with a vengeance, practically putting the reformee under house arrest, chasing him on foot and in cars if he escaped. Both Bob in Akron and Bill in New York actually took drunks into their homes. Anne had one chasing her around the kitchen with a butcher knife, demanding a drink. The Wilsons came home one day to find their *guest* had committed suicide after selling off most of their best clothes.

### HARD LESSON IS LEARNED

The lesson was learned that encouraging dependency was not the way to share sobriety.

Hospitalization became the usual prerequisite to "getting the program." While the alcoholic sobered up, he had constant sober visitors, who told their own stories and presented the medical facts about the disease and its progress. Meanwhile, he was fed solely on a concoction of tomatoes, sauerkraut and Karo syrup (this actually was not intended as torture, but as a source of energy).

Before the newly sober man

could attend a meeting, he had to surrender, in the presence of other men, on his knees, admitting his powerlessness.

This period required tremendous patience of Anne and Lois, who never knew who, in what condition, they might find on their living room couches each morning. Because their husbands were totally preoccupied with their crusade, there was little money—new clothing, travel, luxuries were non-existent. Even food and shelter were "iffy."

### BREAK WITH OXFORD GROUP

By 1937, Bob and Bill had 40 men and their families in their sober groups. The program had no name, although in Akron, everybody went to the meetings of the Oxford Group.

But at about this time, the presence of the alcoholics in Oxford Group meetings began to cause friction. The non-alcoholics wanted more spirituality in the meetings than the alcoholics were comfortable with. Many alcoholics believed that the Higher Power could be . . . each other. The alcoholics did not want group guidance of their personal lives.

### ANONYMITY WAS THE CRUX

The Oxford Group was interested in publicizing the reformation of famous people. The alcoholics felt that anonymity was urgent because of the social stigma of alcoholism, because publicity led to pride and self-inflation, and because a famous man who later *slipped* could damage the movement.

Finally, the alcoholics were (See "Bob and Bill," Page 4)

## GOOD NEWS

Newsletter of the  
Northern California Council  
of Alcoholics Anonymous

Articles of interest to our readers are welcomed and may be mailed to the editor at:

Post Office Box 64090,  
Sunnyvale CA 94088-4090

### Deadlines for Material

December 10 for January-February  
February 10 for March-April  
April 10 for May-June  
June 10 for July-August  
August 10 for September-October  
October 10 for November-December

## 1946 San Francisco Rap Session Marked Birth of the Conference

A Look at the Past from  
CNCA Archives

During the early days when AA was just getting its start on the West Coast, as well as in the east where AA was born and still having growing pains, chaos seemed to be the order of the day. The Twelve Traditions had yet to be published, and many groups around the country were operating under their own guidelines. Bill W., our co-founder, was once quoted: "If AA had accepted only a few of these rules and by-laws, most of us wouldn't have been eligible for membership."

Five of us sat around a poker table at the old Bush Street Alano Club in San Francisco on a Sunday morning in 1946 discussing group problems and how to cope with them. I brought up a problem we were experiencing as a new group in Reno which had started cold turkey.

Dave D. of Palo Alto said his group had had the same problem and explained how it was handled there. Others at the table offered their suggestions. Among these were Bob G., Ray H., Fred K. and myself. We got together the following Sunday to continue our discussions, joined by Nic N. of Berkeley. The sessions turned into monthly gatherings. Anyone was welcome to sit in with us and offer suggestions. By exchanging our views on these group problems, we achieved unity within the fellowship on the West Coast. Ed A. of Alameda; a man from

San Rafael whose name I can't recall; Vic M. of Sacramento, and Floyd B. of Roseville, often met with us. Someone observed that "We don't need to worry about AA on the West Coast as long as Bill and Dr. Bob are in the east to watch over AA there." Bob G. asked: "Suppose Bill and Bob should die. What would happen to us?"

Ray H. left San Francisco for New York to talk with Bill W. about forming the *Northern California Council of AA*. Bill approved the idea and told Ray that if it worked, perhaps he and Dr. Bob could become members of AA like the rest of us.

The first council meeting was held in San Francisco, as I recall, under the name of *Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous*. The second meeting took place in Sacramento at the Civic Auditorium, with a full house. Several of us from Reno and Northern Nevada attended the session. Art S., San Francisco, suggested that Nevada become a part of the

council and Nevada was unanimously voted in with this writer selected as Nevada Representative.

On my way to the next council session, to be held in San Jose, I stopped in at the Bush Street Alano Club to invite OK P. to go with me. OK said he didn't believe in governing bodies. I said I didn't either; that was the primary purpose of the council. He agreed and we drove together in his Model A. On the trip down, OK asked many questions regarding the purpose of the assembly. On the way back, he was giving the answers. He was to become one of the more active members of the council.

At the next session, held in San Francisco, I suggested the council publish its own newspaper. Through this, we could let the groups know the council's purpose, its aims, and disperse information on upcoming sessions. We felt it would save a lot of letter writing and save much material. There was a long  
(See "Northern," Page 5)

### *No Sun Without the Rain*

God hath not promised skies always blue,  
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through.  
God hath not promised sun without rain,  
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

But God hath promised strength for the day,  
Rest for the labor, light for the way.  
Grace for the trials, help from above,  
Unfailing sympathy . . . undying love.

# Bob and Bill Unveil an Idea for a Sick World

(Continued from Page 2)  
 simply more comfortable being just with each other and their families. (In the beginning, all meetings were "open," and included wives. This changed later when single men and women began to join)."

After breaking from the Oxford Group and establishing their own meetings, the alcoholics next had to tackle the problem of financing and spreading the movement. Should they have paid *missionary* workers? Build special for-profit hospitals to treat alcoholism? Write a book about their work? Bill was offered a position as a "lay therapist" at Towns Hospital. He desperately needed the money; could he take it? John D. Rockefeller Jr. was interested in their work. Would he help with funding?

With one exception, the answer to all of the above was—no. Rockefeller did set aside \$5,000 to pay off Dr. Bob's mortgage and give Bill and Bob \$30 a week out of the rest of it, but his general opinion was that money would "spoil this thing."

## THE BIG BOOK

Bill went ahead with the book. He offered his chapters to the meetings for advice and criticism as he finished them, and got endless disagreement in return. The fellowship did decide that they should own the book, so they formed "Works Publishing, Inc.," which eventu-

ally became "AA World Services, Inc." But they argued over the price—\$3.50 seemed high. To compensate, they had the printer put the text on the thickest paper available, which resulted in a very bulky book. Hence the affectionate nickname, *The Big Book*.

They argued about the title, but finally accepted it when someone discovered that there were already 25 books called *The Way Out*, in the Library of Congress, but none called *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

The conclusion of this series will appear in the next issue of GOOD NEWS.

Reprinted from SOBER TIMES

## What Is the Third Legacy?

Our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—is the basic service that AA's Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles; it is a Society of alcoholics *in action*. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth will die.

Hence, an AA service is *anything whatever* that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a 10-cent phone call. The sum total of all services is our *Third Legacy*.

Excerpted with permission from Grapevine's latest book, "THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART, Bill W.'s Grapevine Writings,"

## Looking Forward

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| Feb. 17-19<br>Friday thru<br>Sunday  | 1989 SPRING FLING OF SACRAMENTO AA<br>Red Lion Motor Inn, Sacramento<br>Registration: \$8.00  |
| Feb. 17-19<br>Friday thru<br>Sunday  | SOBER AND FREE OF SAN JOSE<br>Gay and Lesbian Members of AA<br>Scottish Rite Temple, San Jose<br>Registration: \$15 (\$20 after January 20) |
| March 3-5<br>Friday thru<br>Sunday   | SANTA CRUZ YOUNG PEOPLES CONF.<br>Holiday Inn, Santa Cruz<br>Registration: \$10   |
| March 3-5<br>Friday thru<br>Sunday   | 22nd ANNUAL PACIFIC REGION AA<br>SERVICE ASSEMBLY<br>Hawaiian Regent Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii<br>Registration: \$15                          |
| March 10-12<br>Friday thru<br>Sunday | 42nd ANNUAL SPRING NCCAA CONF.<br>Fresno Convention Center, Fresno<br>Registration: \$3.00  |

# The Twelve Promises For Beginners

## *A Tongue-in-Cheek Review*

Taken from  
THE BRACER, Northern Nevada Intergroup

1. You will know your full name and address.
2. You will be able to shave all by yourself.
3. You will be able to dress and undress yourself.
4. You will know the town, state, and country you are in.
5. You will be able to find socks that match.
6. You will be able to smoke without burning yourself.
7. You will lose the fear of God.
8. You will spend less time in the bathroom.
9. You will be able to walk a straight line and pass the balloon test.
10. You will lose the fear of police cars and red lights.
11. You will be able to answer the door without looking through the the peep hole.
12. You will realize what a hell of a mess you have been and thank God for AA.

# Northern California Conference Was Born Out of a Need for AA Answers

*(Continued from Page 3)*

moment of silence, broken by Jean S. saying, "I think Kenny has a good idea. We need an AA newspaper." OK P. supported the idea but wondered who would do all the work. I said, "You're an old newspaper man. You be the editor and have the group secretaries send you the material."

On my next trip to San Francisco, OK was sitting in the Alano Club with another man. He introduced him as a printer who had his own printing office at the beach. They showed me the first copy of the newspaper and asked me what I wanted to name it. "I'm not a newspaper man," I said. "I just like the idea. It's your baby, you name it." OK then ran ads in the first issues asking for suggestions. I believe it was a lady from the Bay Area who suggested *Good News*. That name was adopted and remains today.

Eighteen months after the council formed, co-founder Bill W. met with a few of us at the Lake Merritt Hotel in Oakland. He told us "This is what I want for the Third Legacy."

After serving for two years as Nevada representative, I moved to San Jose, my birthplace, to work for a few weeks. While I was there, I was asked to represent the Santa Clara area at the next council session to be held at San Francisco. I accepted. When we got to San Francisco, Kay P., then secretary of the council and OK's wife, advised me that no

one was present from Nevada and asked if I would represent Nevada to insure continuity. Since there were several others from Santa Clara to take my place, I quickly agreed.

The following session was to be held in Reno, and Kay received a letter from my successor telling her they didn't want the council to be held in Reno, nor did Reno want to be a part of the council any longer. When I returned to Reno, no one seemed to know anything about

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***The Archives Committee appreciates materials of historic nature. Please write to CNCA Archives, P.O. Box 23984, Oakland, CA 94623.***

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dropping out of the council, nor of preventing their meeting in Reno. The representative was out of town trying to sober up at another AA's house. I thought he should be the representative, since he was the biggest critic in Reno AA. Perhaps if he got active in service, he would have a new perception of AA.

Bill W. once said, "Show me someone who is being talked about in AA, and I'll show you someone who is doing good in AA."

Tradition Twelve refers to the "spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."—KEN B., RENO

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