



GOOD NEWS



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The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA

The Rise & Fall Of A Home Group

October 1987

Once upon a time there was a home group of Alcoholics Anonymous. I say "once upon a time," because this group no longer exists. It folded one day after many, many years of serving the alcoholics in its community. Why?

I found this meeting to be a very healthy group of Alcoholics Anonymous. There were many old-timers to be seen talking with new people, there were greeters at the door, a secretary, treasurer, and a GSR all discussing group business. New people were welcomed with a cup of coffee and a handshake. The group just beamed with happy people. A large crowd each week caused many tables to be filled and seats were hard to come by. The last Tuesday of each month the group broke down into smaller groups for table discussion meetings. The rest of the meetings each week were closed speaker/discussion meetings and again seats were hard to come by and the importance of getting there early was common. Coffee was always ready for the first early person to arrive and there was always fellowship after the meeting. Sound good? Maybe this is *your* home group?

One meeting, after a group conscience discussion, a woman was offered the responsibility of GSR. She got the job after discussion about whether she would be good for the group. She started attending area assemblies and GSR work-

shops to learn about the Traditions and how they helped groups stick to their primary purpose. She learned about Conference-approved literature and how it shouldn't be mixed in with other literature to confuse the new people about which is AAs and which is not. She also learned about money in the Fellowship, the 60-30-10 and other plans, and not using basket money to buy outside literature. It was exciting

to me to watch this group becoming informed on issues that affected it as one group within the larger AA.

But then, slowly, the group's customs and practices began to erode. At one group business meeting the GSR pointed out that the literature the group literature representative had purchased was not Conference-approved literature and was purchased with (See RISE & FALL, Page Three)

News From The Chairperson

Through wind, heavy rain, floods, thunder and lightning an amazing number of us made our way to Fresno. The words "I made it!" were music to my ears, and I heard them over and over again. Close to 2500 of us participated in the Fresno Conference, and we were well rewarded. The speakers were extraordinary and were right there in the midst the whole time. The inclement weather seemed to bring us all closer together. I want to thank John W. and Victor B. and their fabulous committee for another first class Conference, one that overcame unbelievable odds and was incredibly successful.

A majority of our eighty-person Steering Committee participated in the two meetings that we held in Fresno. The meetings were positive and productive with sev-

eral major items of business accomplished; we discussed, revised slightly, and approved Barbara M.'s revision of our flier registration form (note the change on the Sacramento flier); we accepted Monterey's bid for the 1998 Spring Conference; and we unanimously re-elected David K. as NCCAA's Treasurer for the next two years. I personally want to thank David for the very effective and efficient service that he is providing NCCAA. His expertise is invaluable.

We had another fine turnout of our Steering Committee members at our April 30 meeting in Stockton where we received our first copy of the *Steering Committee Book of Motions* that Dianne J. had prepared. We were asked to review it thoroughly before our (See MORE FROM, Page Four)

Singleness of Purpose

I recently completed the Eighth Step and have decided that my first amends should be to Alcoholics Anonymous itself, which I believe I have harmed to some extent by violating its singleness of purpose.

I used to identify myself as an alcoholic and an addict. I do not anymore because I now believe other addictions are irrelevant at AA meetings. But, aside from that, I also used to insist on talking about my other addictions beyond what was necessary to relate them to alcohol. I justified this by saying that alcohol was just another drug and so it was unfair to expect me not to talk about all my addictions. And I refused to attend any other fellowship because I claimed to prefer the wisdom and sobriety in AA.

I realize now how rude and self-centered this position was. It is not a question of what is fair or whether alcohol is just another drug. The Traditions and primary purpose of AA are what they are whether I agree or not.

In the past, when I was active, I often had dinner at the homes of people who did not use drugs, but who drank. I never considered insisting that I had the right to smoke a joint at their dinner table because they were drinking wine. And imagine if I had, and then added insult to injury by saying: "And not only do I have a right to use any drug I want to around here if you're going to drink, but I'm going to keep coming back and I'm going to keep using any drug I want to in your home because I like the food you serve and your company better than the food and company I find in the homes of my drug-addict friends, and I have a right to do this because all drugs are the same and I don't care what the rules or customs of your home are."

Such a gross abuse of hospitality sounds preposterous, but that is essentially what I was doing by insisting that I had a right to violate AA's singleness of purpose. I was abusing the hospitality of this fellowship!

This is not an apology. I was too sick to realize how selfishly I was acting, and the mere apology is not necessarily an amends. I am hoping to amend the harm I did by stating clearly what I did, for the benefit of others, and further, by not doing it again.

H.D., *New Medford, N.J.*

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

Tentative Deadline Guidelines

(Not Set in Stone)

First week in January for January Issue
April 1 for Spring Issue
July 1 for Summer Issue
First week in October for Winter Issue

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Good News Policy The **Good News** is the newspaper of the Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous and therefore is a vehicle for you, the members and supporters of the Council to express your views. The views expressed here are those of the writers, and are not intended to represent the opinion of Alcoholics Anonymous or NCCAA as a whole, nor do they necessarily reflect the views of the staff of the **Good News**.

If you would like to contribute articles to the **Good News**, we welcome your participation. The guidelines are as follows: "It (**Good News**) reports the activities of the Council, Hospital and Institution Committee, General Service, and other articles of interest to AA members. News is written about the conferences for the benefit of members unable to attend. News of activities of the Groups in Northern California may also be included."

Tradition 10

In the short form of Tradition 10 we read that "The AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy." *Traditions 11 and 12* (page 176) says "We must never . . . publicly take sides in any fight, even a worthy one . . . AA as a whole . . . (does not) enter into public controversy, because . . . our Society will perish if it does." *AA Comes of Age* (page 108) recalls that "The moment we lent the AA name to any outside enterprise, we got into trouble."

The 12th Concept essay says we should not enter into public controversy, even in self-defense. *Warranty Five* asserts that "At times, the Conference will need to take protective actions . . . never punitively or aggressively controversial at the public level . . . Outside organizations, and even our own members . . . may try to use the AA name for their private purposes . . ."

"AA is prepared to give away . . . all excepting the AA name . . . We simply request that the public use of the AA name be avoided by those agencies who wish to avail themselves of AA techniques and ideas. In case the AA name should be misapplied . . . it would be the duty of the General Service Conference to press for . . . discontinuance . . . always short, however, of public quarreling."

"To some . . . guardianship (of Tradition) implies . . . to publicly punish or sue . . . Such . . . would place the Conference in the position of having violated one Tradition . . . to defend another . . ."

(See TRADITION 10, Page Four)

The Rise & Fall (continued from page one)

money intended for AA use. This business meeting ended with the literature representative throwing the outside literature order forms at the group and leaving.

Later at another business meeting, discussion was held on whether an interpreter for the hearing impaired could be allowed to attend a closed meeting. The group conscience decided against it, since it was a closed meeting. An old-timer, in disagreement, took the matter before the people attending that night's meeting whether they were members of that group or not. The people attending voted to reverse the decision of the group conscience by opening the meeting to anyone. That *meeting* conscience weakened the effectiveness of that *group* conscience, and more people left the group.

This group was so well attended the church adjusted the rent accordingly. But money was always there because of the number of people who attended the meetings. The group became so effective in carrying the message that a local alcoholism referral agency began sending its new young people to the Tuesday meeting as an introduction to AA. This drew other young people to the meeting and eventually it began to be known as a great place for young people to meet. Within a year after this flood of young people, a local center for troubled children began sending some of its clients to the meeting also. By this time some of the old-timers had found other Tuesday meetings to attend. When asked why, they said, "We are not hearing the language of AA that we need to hear to stay sober." Others thought the real reasons might be age differences, dress, language of the street, and just plain being outnumbered young to old.

A powerful principle in AA, rotation — the passing-it-on to the newer people — was in order for the group to grow. This time there was no discussion by group conscience about who would be best for the group or who was sober, but rather anyone who would volunteer got the responsibilities. Secretary, treasurer, and GSR were passed on to people who didn't know the first thing about the principles of AA or anything of the Traditions in action. Once a chairman offered the Traditions for a discussion topic one night and they turned into feelings, drug talk, Freudian concepts, and rehab language. He never came back and neither did the former officers of the group. The group had become a group of the blind leading the blind.

Group conscience began discussing the topics: how do we get older people to return, how are we going to pay this high rent? What are we going to do?

A local DCM was asked to attend a group conscience meeting to listen and offer some suggestions. Members talked about the Traditions, Steps, outside literature, getting sober people to chair the meetings, turning radios off, and the quality of sobriety that action in AA offers. A plea

went out to older members to please return to the meeting. A few did return, but only for a short time. These kids seemed to be left on their own. A new group conscience emerged, struggled for a short time, and failed again when volunteers were needed to fill the frequently vacated group responsibilities. Again, there was no leadership from the now "younger old-timers," as they too left for other groups. Finally, with the rent too much, no coffee, no unity, our home group met last week to announce the end.

Bill W. said that the force which will destroy Alcoholics Anonymous will come very slowly from inside the Fellowship. This group lasted some fourteen to seventeen years. AA consists of home groups, and as a Fellowship we are seeing a breakdown of this principal structure.

If we as a Fellowship don't carefully pass on to newer members the responsibilities that come with being a group, many more groups will go the way of this group. The old-timers must stick around to teach the newer members "how it works," not only in the Twelve Steps but in our groups. Sometimes the new people must drag the answers out of the old-timers, and if they are not at the meetings, we will repeat the mistakes made early in the Fellowship.

We must learn how to keep this Fellowship alive and our groups intact for the next member who needs it. By helping insure the sobriety of others to come, we insure our own sobriety today. The best member of Alcoholics Anonymous that one can be is the best member of a home group that one can be.

*W.S., Rochester, N. Y.
(from the AA Grapevine,
Inc. via Oregon Area Newsletter)*

**Sacramento Will
Host NCCAA
October 6, 7, & 8,
1995
Hope to see you
all there!**

**Please Pre-Register
Early & Mention NCCAA
To Your Hotel**

More From The Chairperson

(Continued from Page One)

next meeting in South San Francisco. We discussed forming a committee to update our *Structure, Purpose, Functions Booklet* where it outlines the duties of the zone chairpeople and the role of the group delegates, deciding to form this committee at our meeting on June 3. We decided to buy a tape recorder for use during our Steering Committee meetings, and we discussed changing our Sunday morning meeting times to 9:00 am and 11:00 am. We will make a final decision on this time change at our June 3 meeting in South San Francisco.

Your eight member tape selection committee had a wonderful time listening to and then discussing the speaker tapes presented for the 1996 San Jose Summer

Conference. It was an unusually challenging assignment this time because we listened to so many fine speakers. The people selected and confirmed to share with us in San Jose are:

Friday Night, Charlie C.,
Burbank, CA

Saturday afternoon, Bob K., San
Francisco, CA

Saturday Night, Earl H., Los
Angeles, CA

Sunday Morning, Francine W.,
Los Angeles

I look forward to seeing all of you in South San Francisco. I thank you again for all your love and support. I feel very blessed to be of service to NCCAA.

Yours in love and service,

DIANE ☺, Chairperson,
Cupertino, CA

NCCAA 48th Annual Summer Conference

San Mateo To Host On June 2, 3, & 4

South S.F. Conference Center
255 South Airport Boulevard
South San Francisco

Top 10 Reasons To Drink and Drive

- 10- There isn't enough tragedy in this world.
- 9- The coroner's office isn't busy enough.
- 8- Prison life is easy and enjoyable.
- 7- You didn't want to go to college, so you might as well let your parents spend your college fund on your funeral.
- 6- As a friend, it is easier to let a "Drunk" drive.
- 5- It's cool to ride in a car with a drunk driver.
- 4- You want to live the rest of your life with the memory of killing or injuring an innocent person.
- 3- You didn't want to fulfill your dreams or reach your goals.
- 2- It is better to be dead than to call a family or friend to pick you up at 2 am.
- 1- The best reason to drink and drive is that your local funeral director needs the money.

Author Unknown-- Submitted by Harold L., Rocklin, CA

Tradition 10

(Continued from Page Two)

Privately . . . we can inform . . . violators that they are out of order. . ."

"The harmony, security, and future effectiveness of AA will depend largely upon our maintenance of a . . . non-aggressive . . . attitude in . . . public relations."

"A public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we may not engage."

AA Comes of Age (page 127) warns that "When we ask for legal rights, enforceable in courts of law, we . . . subject ourselves to possible legal regulation. We might well become endlessly entangled in litigation."

The AA way of life *As Bill Sees It* (page 153) proposes that if AA should unjustly and publicly be attacked, "our best defense would be no defense . . . complete silence at the public level; that if their attacks persist, and they are plainly misinformed, we might communicate with them privately, but not in anger or punitively."

[The above quotations are cited with permission of AA World Services, Inc.]

FRANK B. (Napa, CA)

(Clip this out for your wallet)

NCCAA CONFERENCE DATES

1995 CONFERENCES

SAN MATEO - June 2, 3, 4
SACRAMENTO - Oct. 6, 7, 8

1996 CONFERENCES

MONTEREY - March 8, 9, 10
SAN JOSE - May 31, June 1, 2
REDDING - Oct. 11, 12, 13

1997 CONFERENCES

FRESNO - March 14, 15, 16
OAKLAND - June 6, 7, 8
SACRAMENTO - Oct. 3, 4, 5

1998 CONFERENCES

MONTEREY - Spring

Delegate's Corner

The Pre-Conference Assembly in Calistoga was one of the most successful we've had in recent CNCA history. Thank you to the nearly 400 who participated.

The Post Conference Assembly will be held on May 20th in Watsonville. This is the opportunity for GSRs to get the first hand report of the Conference to take back to their groups. Carrying back this information is just as important to your group as getting their opinions on the agenda items. I hope to see all of you there.

Each year at the General Service Conference new delegates are asked to give a presentation describing their area. This is the presentation that I will be giving this year.

The eighteen geographic and three Spanish districts that make up the California Northern Coastal Area stretch from the San Luis Obispo county line in the south, to the Oregon border in the north, encompassing the coastal counties of Northern California. Each district is made up of the number of subdistricts needed to have the best communication possible, currently there are 172 subdistricts serving approximately 2250 groups. Monthly district meetings are attended by the delegate or one of the other seven area officers.

We hold twelve centrally located Area Committee meetings as well as four district hosted assemblies each year. Our Area PI/CPC, Archives, and Bridging-the-Gap committees meet on Area Committee days beforehand in order to take advantage of the communication that all committees meeting together offer. In addition, there are numerous district sharing days, unity days, workshops and "Agenda Topic" days.

There are twenty-one central offices and intergroups within our boundaries, four which are Spanish. Communication and cooperation with these and the autonomous Hospitals and Institutions Committee of Northern California continue to improve. Although CNCA cooperates with conventions and rallies through scheduling and participation, we do not rely on them financially. Instead we are fully self-supporting through group contributions.

Our area consists of groups that are very well informed and active as well as those who would rather trust more functioning groups in the decision making. We also have groups that are not yet aware of the joy of service. We know there is still much to do and are keenly aware of the gains made through the efforts of those that have preceded us. The area is continuing to grow in participation, energy and the determination to help assure AAs future with special emphasis placed on an effective subdistrict structure.

I love you guys. Love through Service
Jim M., CNCA Delegate Eureka, CA

HUMOR

A drunk in the Automat keeps feeding coins into the slots and piling the food on nearby tables. On his fourth trip for change, the cashier asks him, "Just what are you doing?"

"Doing . . . ?" replies the drunk. "I'm winning!"

A drunk had built up quite a tab one evening before he confessed to the bartender that he was totally broke. "It's okay," replied the bartender. "I'll just write your name and the amount you owe here on the wall, and you can pay it later."

"But I don't want any of my friends to see that!" protested the patron.

"They won't," the barkeep assured him. "We'll just hang your coat over it until it's paid."

From The Grapevine, with permission.

GOOD NEWS Editor Seeks Replacement; Wants Rotation

When the GOOD NEWS Editor Ron J. read the *Steering Committee Book of Motions* that Dianne J. had compiled, and discovered (or was reminded) that he had been involved as editor since 1990, it became evident that the spirit of rotation was long overdue.

"I really didn't realize that I had been doing this for so long," stated Ron. "I have agreed to stay on until next spring. I will be glad to help anyone get started and even take a small part if necessary." "I hope that someone will step forward and be willing to take over this wonderful opportunity for service."



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