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## A.A. AT PLAY

Again, we were blessed with beautiful weather for our San Jose Summer Conference. It seemed to set a mood that was contagious. The volunteers who worked on the committees were eager, courteous, and helpful; and even the concessionaires were pleasant.

The workshops, Marathon Meetings, Young Peoples Meeting, and Spanish Speaking Meeting were well attended, informative, interest holding, and well participated in.

The "Top Drawer" quality of the main speakers reflected the studies of the selection committee, all were well received, shown respect, and greatly appreciated.

Personally, I thought Sister Bea alone would have made the conference memorable.

The singing of the Lord's Prayer to close the conference was very impressive in my opinion; however, I have heard some opposition. Can we have some feedback on this? Please advise your delegates if you have any feelings on this matter. You might also thank the officers and the Steering Committee of NCCAA.

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## A.A. HISTORY - Part 1

# Bob and Anne, Bill and Lois

BY J. S. RUDOLF

Anybody who regularly attends a twelve-step meeting but doesn't know who Bill W. and Dr. Bob are, probably has been sitting under the coffee table with his eyes squeezed shut and his fingers in his ears. Everyone pays homage to the founders, to their wisdom, goodness and farsight. But not everyone takes the time to read the biographies and discover how extremely unlikely it was that AA ever came to be.

First of all, the personalities of the two men are an unlikely match: Bill the idea man, enthusiastic, impatient, stubborn; Bob 16 years older, taciturn, conservative, slow to fire up. Moreover, the chain of important contacts person to person and person to idea that leads up to AA is long and tenuous. If Bill hadn't talked to Dr. Silkworth, if Rowland H. hadn't met Jung, if Ebbie T. hadn't met Rowland H., if Ebbie hadn't looked

up old buddy Bill, if Bill hadn't made that tenth phone call in Akron, if Lois and Anne hadn't been willing to live for years in poverty. . .

Bob Smith was born in a small town in Vermont in 1879. His foster sister was so much older that he grew up essentially an only child. His father was a judge and the family was well off. His mother was apparently a cold woman, strict with her son and insistent on much church-going. Bedtime was 5 p.m. each evening. But Bob, headstrong and rebellious, got up, and sneaked out to play, quite regularly.

There were no traumas in Bob's childhood. He wasn't much interested in studying, but he was popular and continued to rebel against authority. In high school he met Anne Ripley, whom he eventually got around to marrying, 17 years later.

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## A.A. AT HISTORY (con't)

It was at Dartmouth that Bob started drinking heavily. Of course, so did all the other college men. Few people saw heavy boozing in college as the beginning of a long slide down.

Because his mother opposed a medical career, Bob tried and failed at other careers first--in a manufacturing company, as a salesman for heavy hardware, at Filene's department store--but finally wound up a premed student at the University of Michigan.

By now the drinking had progressed from boyish fun to a serious obstacle to getting on with life. Bob was asked to leave Michigan because of his binges, and he transferred to Rush University. There were more binges, more troubles with school authorities. He was finally permitted to stay on at Rush only if he remained "dry," and perhaps sensing that this was his last chance, he managed that, and took his medical degree.

He didn't drink much during his internship, either, probably because there wasn't any time to spare for it; interns are notoriously overworked and underpaid.

He opened a practice in Akron and went back to the bottle. Eventually, he became so ill that his father had to take him home

to Vermont. He was in bed for two months and took two more for recuperation, and it scared him enough to make him quit--for a while. He married Anne Ripley during this long sobriety; it was 1915 and he was 36 years old. They had a son, Smitty.

Then came Prohibition. As Dr. Bob remembers it, he "felt quite safe." He thought he'd lay in a small stock of alcohol, and then when that was gone, there wouldn't be any more. The supply would have dried up, liquor being illegal.

Of course, Prohibition didn't work out that way. Dr. Bob was soon out of control again and alcohol was readily available to fuel him, if not from the neighborhood bootlegger, then from the grain alcohol supplies that the government allowed doctors to prescribe. Dr. Bob would simply pick a name out of the phone book and write that person a

prescription for alcohol, which he would then fill, for himself. He hid his liquor from Anne: on the roof, in the coal bin and in his socks.

For the next 17 or so years, life took on a dreadful, barely manageable pattern. Bob was well-liked by nurses and colleagues. He was calm, kind, courteous and competent as a surgeon. He stayed sober long enough each day to maintain his practice as a proctologist. There was an occasional day-long binge, but he tried never to see patients or go to the hospital when drinking. Every afternoon at four o'clock, he went home and drank himself to sleep.

As the disease of alcoholism progressed, however, it became harder and harder to keep it a secret from the medical community. And life at home had deteriorated. The Smiths had adopted a five-year old girl, Sue, so there were two children to feed. Anne had begun to chain smoke, probably because of anxiety. She persuaded her husband to attend the meetings of the Oxford Group, a religious movement that emphasized honesty, love, unselfishness and meditation. He attended the meetings, but he kept on drinking.

The family had few friends and fewer invitations. As the "secret" of the drink-

## DEADLINES FOR MATERIAL

Date	Issue
Dec 10	Jan-Feb
Feb 10	Mar-Apr
April 10	May-June
June 10	July-Aug
Aug 10	Sept-Oct
Oct 10	Nov-Dec



ing got out, Dr. Bob's practice declined and money got very scarce. There was worry they might lose their house. Bob's son Smitty remembers eating a lot of potato soup, and there were suppers consisting solely of bread and milk.

Dr. Bob was ready to meet Bill W.

To be continued next month.

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A Sponsor is someone you call on the telephone to tell him you are not speaking to him--and he listens to every word you are not saying.

A Sponsor is the person you most fear to love, so you tell her you don't want to see her--and she still comes when you call.

He accepts your insanity when even you won't admit it.

She is responsible enough to care, but humble enough to know which decisions are yours, or God's.

He stands by his commitments as well as you--so you call him selfish.

She is a tower of strength--and a frail fragment of humanity. She gets her rotten days--do you share your good ones?

He and She are alcoholics, too.

Excerpt from San Fernando Newsletter

## A WORD FROM YOUR SPONSOR

A WORD FROM YOUR SPONSOR - Dear Friend: Sorry to hear about your recent "problems." I know it does you no good, but it should, knowing that someone cares. A lot of "someones" care, in fact.

There's never been a guarantee in A.A. that cares and woes will disappear forever when you get sober and start practicing the program. But I will guarantee you this; there isn't anything that drinking will make go away, clear up, or change for the better.

Life is full of ups and downs; that's life. And now that you've been sober awhile and working the steps, that's what it's all about. Living, one day at a time.

The program helps us face life on a day-to-day basis much better than we were able to do when drinking. But things only seem worse when we're sober because we understand and feel things much sharper.

(I remember when I was a few months sober and some oldtimer said, "Isn't it great now that you can really feel things." At the time, my nerve ends were rubbed raw, and I did not think "feeling" was all that great, to be honest about it.)

My first sponsor

had a way of putting things into perspective for me. Every once in a while, he'd ask me to make a comparison test with various things in my life, compare them to when I was drinking. Some things, I felt, I was still being short-changed on, but I had to admit more often than not that things, in general, were really much better. The longer I was sober, the more I got "into" the program, the more pluses I began to chalk up in these comparison tests.

No; it never has gotten to be 100 percent pluses, but it has steadily been a case of diminishing minuses.

Maybe that's what you ought to do; make your own comparison test. Work it something like you did the Fourth Step; you know, put the "good" things on one side of a sheet of paper and the "bad" on the other. Only this time you'll need a third column for the plus/minus comparisons item-by-item.

When considering this, I refer you to Page 103 of the Big Book, where it says, ".our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody and anything. We have to!!"

Where you run  
(Continued on Page 5)



## WHEN I GET TO BE GSR, I WANT TO GROW UP

Here I am at the Pre-Conference Assembly. My sponsor once introduced me to the Delegate, and she has remembered my name! I am alternate General Service Representative, and the GSR is not here. I am sitting with a District Committee Member and the District Committee Chairperson, both former GSRs of my home group, and I have a fistful of notes from the group conscience. My companions prod me to the microphone, and I don't trip or mumble. This is WONDERFUL! I can hardly wait to be the real GSR.

Other GSRs are groaning about the way their groups treat them. Some of them quit. MY group asks for my input, and people stop me to say they agree with what I said at the microphone. We have a big fight about Hazelden books, and my group stops selling them. I quote the Traditions--the whole tradition--and wish I could explain better so everyone could understand.

I'm also on the District Committee now, and I do my job well. I do it so well that I really have time to fill in here and there where other jobs aren't getting covered.

And I listen at all the business meetings I go to--I can remind people exactly what was said and what should be on our agenda. In fact, I can act as a DCM as well as a GSR. My group is really lucky to have me. I do not understand why my sponsor wants to sit in the background at business meetings and is practicing keeping her mouth shut, but I respect her need to do so.

Somebody yelled at me at the business meeting. I yelled too, and some of the meeting secretaries didn't get a chance to be heard. The alternate GSR and I have to go out for ice cream to recover. We also have to develop strategies to get a group conscience on the agenda topics because

the idea of "helping out" General Service is inappropriate in recovery meetings. HUH? YOU explain to them--I don't seem to be getting through.

There are some changes in the District Committee, and people who could have said something are wondering how they happened. They didn't attend all the meetings they should have gone to, and they didn't listen when they went. I'm getting tired of having to speak up all the time. After all--I am only one person. Oh. My group has added a whole bunch of meetings to the schedule. One person can't get to them all. We need a committee, and I am on it; but we've found someone else to chair it. The alternate GSR speaks out strongly in

### — 1988 Events —

|            |                                                                                   |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SEPT 4     | TRI-COUNTY AA PICNIC<br>Hidden Valley Ranch, Fremont                              |
| SEPT 2 - 4 | 11TH ANNUAL SIERRA NV ROUND-UP<br>John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel, Reno               |
| SEPT 9 -11 | GOLD COUNTRY ROUND-UP<br>P.O. Box 355, Angels Camp, CA                            |
| OCT 7 - 9  | 41ST ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE<br>of NCCAA, Redding Civic<br>Auditorium, Redding, CA |
| OCT 20 -23 | 27TH ANNUAL HAWAII AA CONF.<br>Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu                   |
| OCT 28 -30 | 9TH ANNUAL CCYPAA CONFERENCE<br>BY THE SEA, Monterey Conf. Center                 |



defense of changes she is encouraging. She's doing fine--what a treasure--and needs only an occasional nudge to keep her priorities straight. When it's her turn, she'll be a great GSR. I can let go.

The District Committee is meeting next week. The mailing list is up to date, and I've got the keys. Yep, all set. Maybe I'll phone a couple of people and offer them a ride.

I am living the Traditions. Some of the Concepts seem pretty useful in daily life as well. It sure is easy to talk at recovery meetings about how these parts of the program work in my life. Am I available to be a District Committee Member? Well, I know what one does, but elections are in November. I'll see what my Higher Power has me doing at that point. I hope he wants me to be available, because I sure love General Service to Alcoholics Anonymous. Right at the moment, though, I'm GSR for the greatest home group there is. And a lady full of giggles just asked me to be her sponsor. I can hardly wait for the meeting!

Marion L.  
Eureka, CA

## A.A. AT PLAY

(Continued from Page 1)

I personally would like to thank all the Host Group for an outstanding weekend of AA in action.

The Steering Committee met and worked during the conference to take care of their duties as they enjoyed the fulfillment one gets from attending these incomparable AA conclaves, along with all the other delegates and visitors.

Mark your calendars for our conference in Redding this October.

Yours in service,

Don S., NCCAA Delegate  
of CCFAA Intergroup

## LIVING SERMON

I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one, any day; I'd rather one should walk with me, that merely show the way. I can soon learn how to do it, if you'll let me see it done; I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run. All the lectures you deliver, may be very wise and true, but I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do. Though I may not understand you and the fine advice you give, there is no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

## A WORD FROM YOUR SPONSOR

(Continued from Page 3)

across minuses in the comparison test, ask yourself if they might not be due to the fact you haven't been willing to admit that the "problem" is of your own making because you haven't stopped fighting "anybody and anything."

Abe Lincoln's line about people being as happy as they choose to be is a bit simplistic, but it does have merits. Happiness can often be as much a frame of mind as it is a condition influenced by "outside forces." In other words, if you make a bad situation worse, by your attitude about it, then you can become the problem.

All this talk about comparison tests reminds me it's been a while since I made one myself. Maybe that will help keep me on an even keel, and keep alive my gratitude for what A.A. has meant to me.

Remember, it is an "inside" job.

In A.A. faith and love, Your sponsor.  
(from "Hello Central")

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