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HOW July 7, 2003

TRADITION 7

"Every AA group ought be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

We do have to be practical. A group can hardly hold its regular meetings on a street corner, and an empty basket won't fill a coffee urn. As soon as we become active in a group, we learn how many expenses are involved in making its meetings effective. Then our horizons broaden. What about that Intergroup or Central Office so many of us called to ask for help? Phone companies don't give free service. Beyond our own locality, we learn about the AA General Service Office and the work it does for groups everywhere. AA activity is self-supporting at all levels, and in every case the responsibility comes right back to us, the individual members, for we are AA.

Perhaps, especially when we are very new, our contributions clink, rather than rustle. The first members were in the same fix and it seemed to them that AA would need more outside help than the modest gifts then coming in. Their plans required grand scale philanthropy. (Tradition Six hadn't evolved yet; Bill W. recalled a scheme for "a chain of hospitals.") But John D. Rockefeller, Jr., an early friend, said, "I am afraid that money will spoil this thing." A few AA's had already reached the same conclusion and gradually this minority became a majority as experience showed that members themselves could provide enough to finance AA's proper aim.

In its simplest application, Tradition Seven is easily understood. When we hear about a new AA group being started with funds from a Federal antipoverty program, our quick reaction is "Somebody goofed!" But then we come to "borderline" cases. Groups put on a raffle for the benefit of their Central Office and invite the public to buy tickets. Or a hometown paper runs an ad for an AA dance and show. Both projects would be routine for any other society. For us, both mean that we've got the hand out again, asking nonmembers for monetary support.

Often, of course, we don't have to ask. AA is now high on the list of worthy causes. GSO and groups politely turn down many unsolicited gifts and bequests. In Tradition Seven, there's a note of realism.... handsome gifts may have strings attached. We even put a limit of \$2,000 on the amount members may leave to AA in their wills or contribute annually while living so that none of us can buy influence in AA, no matter how rich we are.

Money may pose a different problem if a group treasury grows too fat or far exceeds a prudent reserve. Squabbling over uses for the spare cash, groups have lost their unity and strayed from their purpose. But there's one simple solution that strengthens our unity and advances our purpose. That is, give the excess to AA activities and services.

Reprinted with permission from AA pamphlet, The Twelve Traditions Illustrated, p43

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Humility is...

Perpetual quietness of heart;

It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me.

It is to be at rest when nobody praises me and when I am blamed or despised.

It is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.

(from a plaque on Dr,. Bob Smith's desk)

TAKE YOUR MEDICINE DAILY AS PRESCRIBED...

		R. H. SMITH	M. D.	
2	ND NATIONAL	BLDG.	A	KRON, OHIO
TELEPHONE: HE-8523				REG. NO.
D	FOR	alcoholics		
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7 Seven VII

STEF

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

Since this Step so specifically concerns itself with humility, we should pause here to consider what humility is and what the practice of it can mean to us. Indeed, the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of AA's Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all AA's have found, too, that unless they develop much more of this precious quality than may be required just for sobriety, they still haven't much chance of becoming truly happy. Without it, they cannot live to much useful purpose, or, in adversity, be able to summon the faith that can meet any emergency.

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TRADITION

"Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

- 1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a Tittle more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?
- 2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
- 3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
- 4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
- 5. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
- 6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

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CONCEPT

"The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness."

- A. Do we act responsibly regarding the "power of the purse?" •
- B. Do we realize that the practical and spiritual power of the Conference will nearly always be superior to the legal power of the General Service Board?

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Brick by Brick

Too many of us spend a lot of time thinking one thing and expecting to become something else. Conditions of being are not attained by thinking of their opportunities; health is not obtained by studying and thinking about disease; nor is happiness attained by dwelling on the sorrows and misery rampant in the world. We are not so constituted that we can devote our time and thought to one thing and become something entirely different.

Most of us completed our courses under the tutelage of John Barleycorn ~ even the extracurricular activities. To master our course in sobriety we have to think and live sobriety to the exclusion of those things we learned with old J.B.

We are only showing the processes of our own recovery when we spend too much time thinking of our drinking careers. Even at its best, such contemplation is not good.

Each of us in our own way is attempting to build something better and finer than we've known before. All right, then, we should have a blueprint for our sobriety.

If we were going to build a temple we certainly wouldn't study the plans for a tavern. They are opposites in purpose and in design.

In the 12 Steps of AA we are given the best tools in the world with which to build our structure of sobriety. But what good are those tools going to do us if we don't study the right plans?

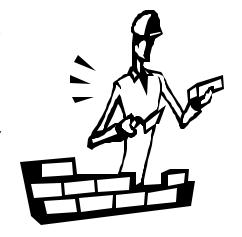
The first and most important thing for us to plan is our foundation. This is going to have to be good. It will have to be strong enough to support our edifice against all stress and strain and the buffetings of the winds of Fate.

Here are some of the materials we are going to need for our foundation. First, we'll need a large portion of humility ~ true humility, not the doormat variety. Another good word for "humility" is "teachability." Teachability is the absence of self-will and egotism.

Another thing we'll need in goodly amount is gratitude. Gratitude to that Power Greater than ourselves... because only with the help of that Power can we again become sane and useful people. And only as we make the most of ourselves can we truly make amends to others.

Tolerance is another material we must have, great heaps of it. It makes these other things blend well.

Now we'll mix all these materials together and to them we'll add the strongest cement in the world ~ love.



These are the elements of a most solid and enduring foundation on which we are safe in erecting our house of sobriety.

Okay, so we know what we are gong to put into our foundation. The next question is, "How big is it going to be?" That we can answer for ourselves by deciding what we need room for in our lives. If we are going to (try to) practice the principles set down in AA "in all our affairs," we are going to need a lot of room in which to grow.

So we have our foundation. Now let's see what materials we have at hand for our structure. Let's be very sure that none of our materials are faulty. The bricks with which we build our house must be as perfect as we can make them. If we allow our bricks to become shot through with the straws and rubble of self-pity, resentment, fear, narrow mindedness, egotism and reservations of one sort or another we are going to find that our entire structure will suffer as the result of the inferior materials.

We are all familiar with the ingredients necessary for bricks of lasting value, such as faith, courage, determination, kindness, understanding, generosity, sincerity, friendliness, self respect and true compassion. These are but a few but we can know that if we use plenty of these our structures will have endurance as well as beauty.

Keeping our blueprint in mind, we'll put each brick in its proper place. And then, almost before we know it, our house of sobriety will become a reality – a reality that will show how closely we've followed our own particular blueprint.

Reprinted with permission of AA Grapevine, Inc., August, 1949



F Y I . . . and Pass It On!

NEW MEETING

The Source Mission 1872 Commerce Ave Vero Beach OPEN DISCUSSION Thursdays 7PM

LAKEWOOD PARK GROUP

10th Anniversary Party
United Methodist Church
5405 Turnpike Feeder Rd.
Friday evening, July 18th
EATING @ 6:30
SPEAKER @ 8PM
Food Donations Requested

LADIES MEETING

South Vero Group Star Plaza 634 Old Dixie Hwy OPEN DISCUSSION Saturdays 9AM

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN AA (FCYPAA) 2003 CONVENTION

"AGE OF MIRACLES"

FRIDAY, AUGUST 22nd THRU SUNDAY, AUGUST 24th HOLIDAY INN

2605 N Hwy A1A, Indiatlantic, FL 32903

FABULOUS WEBISTE: www.fcypaaa.org

ALCOHOPE COMMITMENTS

July ~ August ~ September

TUESDAYS		SATURDAY	S
Friday Night Young People's	July 1	Indian River Women's	July 5
Indian River Men's	July 8	Barefoot Bay Wednesday	July 12
Candlelight	July 15	South Vero	July 19
Royal Palm	July 22	Discovery Women's	July 26
Noontime Recovery	July 29	King's Highway	August 2
Serenity House	August 5	Beachside Beginners	August 9
Free & Easy	August 12	Sebastian Freedom	August 16
ODAAT	August 19	Vero 12 & 12	August 23
Midnight Oil	August 26	Friday Night Young People's	August 30
	September 2	Discovery Women's	September 6
Indian River Men's	September 9	Candlelight	September 13
South Vero	September 16	Vero Beach Group	September 20
Serenity House	September 23	ODAAT	September 27
	September 30 CARRY THE	AA MESSAGE!	

FOR INFORMATION CALL LEE: 567-4759



JULY BIRTHDAYS



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

To Groups whose AA birthday announcements for the past few months were inadvertently omitted from the HOW, please accept the apologies of the Central Office. We are unable to correct the previous oversights. Congratulations to all and we look forward to printing your announcements next year for the months we missed!

* 1	****	☆☆ ☆	****	& 	*****	☆ ☆ ₹	☆☆
***	SURFSIDE GROUP		SOUTH VERO GROUP		ODAAT		☆
☆	Diane H.	12	Jeremiah D.	1	Irene C.	1	☆☆
*	Howard G.	49	Rob R.	1	Kathy T.	2	*
<u>\$</u>			Steve B.	2	Sherrie Mc.	7	*
₩ ☆	NOONTIME RECOVERY		Chris U.	2	George W.	8	☆☆☆
☆	Judi S.	1	Lee K.	4	Frank Z.	12	*
*	Lenny O.	5	Julie L.	6	Dan N.	12	*
***	Earl W.	8	Jim P.	8	Lisa C.	13	☆☆☆
☆	Eugene D.	8	Donna A.	12			☆
☆	George S.	24	Carol H.	14	VERO BEACH MEN'S		\$\$\$\$\$
¥ ☆			Dutch V.	18	Jeremiah D.	1	¥7 ☆
	SAFE HARBOR WOMEN'S		Web S.	19	Stephen H.	1	*
*	Mary Lou R.	13	Dave N.	25	Rich P.	1	*
™	Patricia B.	16			John B.	3	☆☆
☆			ROYAL PALM GROUP		Leonard O.	5	*
*	VERO 12 & 12		Barbara M.	13	Bob W.	12	
₹ ₹	Adam B.	1	Janice S.	14			₹ ₹
☆	Kelly W.	1	Roger C.	31			☆
***	Jeremiah D.	1			HAPPY		*
☆	Joe E.	11	FREE & EASY GROUP		BIRTHDAY!		☆☆
☆	Cliff S.	17	Sharon D.	5			☆

NOTICE TO GROUPS:

To publish announcements of birthdays being celebrated by your Group's members each month, please bring list of names and numbers of years to Central Office and put in filing cabinet in folder labeled "HOW Editor" or send via e-mail to irhow@yahoo.com.

Also if you would like to post the day your Anniversary meeting takes place each month, we invite you to include that information as well.



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Step Seven

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

The spiritual focus of Step 7 is humility, asking a higher power to do something that cannot be done by self-will or mere determination.

This step is the culmination of a great deal or preparation of working the "middle steps" of AA's 12-step program. After carefully taking a moral inventory, admitting one's faults and becoming willing to have them removed, the final step in the process is to humbly ask for help in removing those character defects that may have been in effect for many years.

These faults can range from simply having been dishonest -- lying about problems to others -- or having held resentments against love ones. Or these faults may involve much more serious offenses. Regardless, the 12 steps provide a path to freedom from the past and an opportunity to begin anew.

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"Perfect" Humility

For myself, I try to seek out the truest definition of humility that I can.

This will not be the perfect definition, because I shall always be *imperfect*. At this writing, 1 would choose one like this: "Absolute humility would consist of a state of complete freedom from myself, freedom from all the claims that my defects of character now lay so heavily upon me. Perfect humility would be a full willingness, in all times and places, to find and to do the will of God."

When I meditate upon such a vision, I need not be dismayed because I shall never attain it, nor need I swell with presumption that one of these days its virtues shall all be mine.

I only need to dwell on the vision itself, letting it grow and ever more fill my heart. This done, I can compare it with my last-taken personal inventory. Then I get a same and healthy idea of where I stand on the highway to humility. I see that my journey toward God has scarce begun.

As I thus get down to my right size and stature, my self-concern and importance become amusing.

Reprinted with permission, As Bill Sees It

A tangible definition for humility helped me understand step 7. From the 12&12 step 5 is: "Another great dividend we may expect from confiding our defects to another human being is humility, a word often misunderstood. To those who have made progress in AA, it amounts to a clear recognition of what and who we really are, followed by a sincere attempt to become what we could be. Therefore, our first practical move toward humility must consist of recognizing our deficiencies."

For me, therefore, thoroughness with steps 4 and 5 created step 6 willingness and the required step 7 humility as defined above.

The Big Book step 7 prayer reads, "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way

of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen. We have then completed Step Seven."

The words "shortcomings" and "defects of character" are different, in my opinion. Like many other AAs, I interchanged them at first. But, I felt uneasy. Today I regard a defect of character as thinking that conflicts with recovered ideals.

A shortcoming is tangible action or omission of responsible action that falls short of recovered behavior. It could be thought of as a defect of character in action or of the omission of appropriate action by a responsible person.

Considerable relief occurred knowing that it is impossible to remove all undesirable thoughts. However, healthy

action can be within our willingness to act correctly regardless of feelings and occasional wrong thoughts.

Repetition of recovered behaviors develops intuitive responses to those things which used to baffle and frustrate us. Former faulty responses to life's events may pop into mind. Quickly, however, newly learned and practiced thinking and acting overpower the old ways.

The 7th step prayer mysteriously and gratefully hastens this process for me in stubborn situations.

"...It works it really does." (From the Big Book, end of Chapter 6.)

Reprinted with permission Roger N., Cape Cod MA

2005 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

HOW

Frequently Asked Questions About the 2005 International Convention and Travel to Canada

1. When and where will the 2005 International Convention take place?

The 70th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous will be celebrated at the 2005 International Convention in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 30–July 3, 2005.

- 2. What is the theme of the 2005 International Convention?

 The theme of the 2005 International Convention is "I Am Responsible."
- 3. Have AA International Conventions been held in Canada before?

 Yes. There have been International Conventions in Toronto (1965), and Montreal (1985). As you may know, the Responsibility Statement was adopted at the 1965 International Convention in Toronto.
- 4. *Is there information available now regarding the 2005 International Convention?*

At this time, only Frequently Asked Questions related to travel information is available.

5. When will registration and hotel information be available?

Registration & hotel information will be mailed to all groups in August/September 2004.

6. Why is GSO providing travel information to Canada at this time?

To provide resources for information regarding travel to Canada for AA members, GSO has posted Frequently Asked Questions on AA's Web Site, www.aa.org. Some members need additional time to meet Canadian requirements for admission into the country; and, to process forms and applications through government agencies.

7. If travel to Canada is difficult for some U.S. members, why are we holding an International Convention in Toronto?

The Fellowship of the United States and Canada makes up the General Service Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous in North America, and functions as one entity in spirit and in service to the Fellowship. As this event rotates through the regions of AA, there will be times when it takes place in the U.S., and other times when it's held in Canada. Laws and other circumstances may impede some members from traveling from one country to the other. For instance, some Canadians could not attend the 2000 International Convention in Minneapolis because of the difference in value of the Canadian dollar and U.S. dollar. Rotation of International Conventions provides accessibility for all members. The Toronto Visitors and Convention Bureau has assured AA that Canada will welcome and cooperate with members for the 2005 International Convention in Toronto.

8. Are there any restrictions or regulations affecting travel to Canada in 2005?

Yes. The U.S. and Canada each have restrictions and regulations that apply to citizens and visitors who travel from one country to the other. Border crossing into Canada has significantly changed, particularly in the last year.

9. Who will have to process forms and applications to gain admission to Canada?

It is suggested that those who believe they have some past legal incident, such as a DUI or felony that could inhibit their attendance at the 2005 International Convention, seek assistance through some of the information listed below.

10. What Canadian travel information is currently available?

The International Convention assignment at GSO is not as yet up-and-running. However, below are some resources gathered to aid members in making plans to attend the 2005 International Convention (most questions can be answered by connecting to one of the links below). Also, a good travel book on Canada will provide valuable information on needed documents and border crossing requirements, as well as vacation tips.

Web Site: U.S. Department of State:

http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html

Note: It has been strongly suggested that attendees obtain a passport.

Web Site: Tips For Travelers to Canada: http://www.travel.state.gov/tips_canada.html

Web Site: Canada United States—Welcome: http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/can-am/menu-en.asp

Web Site: Citizenship & Immigration Canada – to enter Canada: http://cicnet.ci.gc.ca/

Web Site: Rehabilitation for Persons Who Are Inadmissible to Canada Because of Past Criminal Activities:

http://cicnet.ci.gc.ca/english/applications/rehabil.html

Note: Anyone with DUIs or felonies should contact a Canadian Consulate to determine if he or she is admissible to Canada; or to ask what can be done to become eligible. Canada considers all DUI/DWIs as felonies. A new law allows most people with DUI/DWIs occurring 10 years ago or more (from June 2005) to be admissible to Canada. However, it's best to check with a consulate (see web site below).

Web Site: Going to Canada-Embassies and Consulates (worldwide): http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/world/embassies/menu-en.asp

Web Site: Canadian Government Offices in the U.S.: http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/can-am/menuen.asp?act=v&mid=1&cat=1&did=227

Note: Forms and applications for "rehabilitation" and "Minster's permits" are available at Canadian embassies and consulates in all countries. Embassy and consulate staff can answer questions regarding requirements, filling out documents, and fees.

11. When and where is the 2010 International Convention being held?

AA's 75th anniversary will be celebrated at the 2010 International Convention in San Antonio, Texas, July 1-July 4, 2010.

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HELPING

MY ROLE AS HELPER IS NOT TO DO THINGS FOR THE PERSON I AM TRYING TO HELP, BUT TO *BE* THINGS. NOT TO TRY TO CONTROL AND CHANGE THEIR ACTIONS BUT THROUGH UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS, TO CHANGE MY *RE*ACTIONS. I WILL CHANGE MY NEGATIVES TO POSITIVES, FEAR TO FAITH, AND CONTEMPT FOR WHAT THEY DO TO RESPECT FOR THEIR POTENTIAL. I WILL CHANGE HOSTILITY TO UNDERSTANDING. I WILL NOT TRY TO MAKE THEM FIT A STANDARD OR IMAGE THAT I CHOOSE BUT I WILL ALLOW THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE THEIR OWN DESTINY REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEIR CHOICE MAY BE. I WILL CHANGE MY DOMINANCE TO ENCOURAGEMENT, PANIC TO SERENITY, THE INERTIA OF DESPAIR TO THE ENERGY OF MY OWN PERSONAL GROWTH, AND SELFJUSTIFICATION TO SELF-AWARENESS.

SELF-PITY BLOCKS EFFECTIVE ACTION. THE MORE I INDULGE IN IT, THE MORE I FEEL THAT THE ANSWER TO MY PROBLEMS IS A CHANGE IN OTHERS AND IN SOCIETY, NOT IN MYSELF. THUS I BECOME A HOPELESS CASE. EXHAUSTION IS THE RESULT WHEN I USE MY ENERGY IN MULLING OVER THE PAST WITH REGRET OR IN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WAYS TO ESCAPE A FUTURE THAT HAS YET TO ARRIVE. PROJECTING AN IMAGE OF THE FUTURE AND ANXIOUSLY HOVERING OVER IT FOR FEAR THAT IT WILL OR IT WON'T COME TRUE USES ALL OF MY ENERGY AND LEAVES ME UNABLE TO LIVE TODAY. YET LIVING TODAY IS THE ONLY WAY TO HAVE A LIFE.

I WILL HAVE NO THOUGHT FOR THE FUTURE ACTIONS OF OTHERS, NEITHER EXPECTING THEM TO BE BETTER OR WORSE AS TIME GOES ON, FOR IN SUCH EXPECTATIONS I AM REALLY TRYING TO CONTROL THE OTHER PERSON. I WILL LOVE AND LET BE. ALL PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS CHANGING. IF I TRY TO JUDGE THEM, I DO SO ONLY ON WHAT I THINK I KNOW OF THEM, FAILING TO REALIZE THAT THERE IS MUCH I DO NOT KNOW. I WILL GIVE OTHERS CREDIT FOR ATTEMPTS AT PROGRESS AND FOR HAVING HAD MANY VICTORIES WHICH TO ME MAY BE UNKNOWN. I TOO AM ALWAYS CHANGING AND I CAN MAKE THAT CHANGE A CONSTRUCTIVE ONE, IF I AM WILLING.

I CAN CHANGE MYSELF, OTHERS, I CAN ONLY LOVE.

Reprinted with permission, EDIG Newsletter, Ossining, NY

LIFF'S DASH

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on her tombstone from the beginning... to the end.

He noted that first came her date of birth and spoke the following date with tears, But he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years (1900—1970).

For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth... And now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth. For it matters not how much we own, the cars... the house... the cash. What matters most is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard... Are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged. We should just slow down enough to consider what's true and real and always try to understand the way other people feel

We should be less quick to anger, and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before. We should treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile... remembering that this special dash might only last a while.

So when your eulogy's being read with your life's actions to rehash... Would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

Author Unknown

THE LIVING SERMON

I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day.
I would rather have you walk with me than merely tell the way For the eye is a better pupil and more willing than the ear. Fine counseling is confusing... examples are always clear. The best of all the preachers are the ones who live their creed. For to see good works in action is what everybody needs.

I can soon learn to do it if you let me see it done.
I can watch your feet in action. but your tongue too fast may run.
The high advice you give me may be very wise and true, but I would rather get my lesson by observing what you do.

I may not understand the high advice you give, but there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

Author Unknown

IN MEMORIAM Shane D. Atwell (1968 - 2003)



Well loved member South Vero Group





"HOME GROUP" MEMBERSHIP... HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?

The other day I was talking to a fellow AA who very proudly announced the fact that he belongs to **Four**... count'em... **Four** Home Groups, I stared at this AA in amazement and asked if that makes for quadruple sobriety. Now I know that was extremely sarcastic. (I'm working on that particular character defect, folks... bear with me.)

The exchange started me thinking. I remembered when I first came around AA and the sudden feeling of total inclusion I felt when I finally joined my first "Home Group" back on the Jersey Shore. Included in my meeting attendance at that time were 3 weekly meetings in the same church about 6 blocks from my house. Each meeting was a different group and I thought that if it was true what I was told about the benefits derived from belonging to and being part of a "Home Group," imagine how I would benefit if I joined all three.

Well, my sponsor had to take me down a peg. He explained the Home Group to me in simple terms but in great detail. He talked about what it entails to be a "good" member and about the responsibilities and obligations of having a Home Group. The responsibilities and obligations of group membership are few but huge. And the benefits are astounding if at the same time I apply myself and work this simple program of recovery as written in the first 164 pages of the book Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Home Group is where I accept and carry out responsibilities. These may be varied, of course. It used to be as simple as "ABC," **A**shtrays, **B**rooms and **C**offee. Well we all know what happened to the ashtrays, but the brooms and coffee are still and hopefully always will be viable "getting sober" tools for the newcomer and "staying sober" tools for the rest of us.

The "Home Group" is where my voice is heard. It is heard at the Group level and included in what becomes the group's conscience at the business meeting and it is carried through the GSR and Central Office Representative to the rest of the AA world. I don't know how many of you caught it but did you see those two words, "BUSINESS" and "MEETING?" Right. Business Meeting. This is where membership in a Home Group really shines. It is where I get to really be a part of AA rather than sitting around the edges. And it is where I learn and where opportunities abound for me to truly place principles before personalities. Love, Tolerance, Acceptance and just about every positive principle we try to live by are in action at business meetings where our primary purpose is to develop and maintain an informed group conscience and to continue to stay sober and carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

It is through the business meeting that I learn about the rest of the AA world, what is happening and what is not. This is where I get the chance to be of service in some capacity to my group and thereby to AA as a whole

It is at the business meeting that I learned that each group sends an annual form to GSO that has the name of the Group, the name and address of the GSR, the group's meeting information and... are you ready... the number of members in the group. Don't be too impressed with that because that's the one area where we AAs totally blow it. I don't know

why but for some reason we AAs very seldom resign from a group upon joining another, and another, and another, and so on. Some AAs are counted 4, 5 or 6 times. Is that important? Yes, it's extremely important.! It has an impact on where AA is or is not going. Are we growing, or are we stagnant. By belonging to more than one group, we are lying to the rest of the AA world as to the true status of AA in Indian River County.

If the numbers keep growing, then it must follow that we are doing something right. We must be carrying the message of hope and recovery in a positive manner and it is being heard. Lives are being saved. But are we really doing all we can? Or are we counting our members 2, 3 or 4 times and then patting ourselves on the back?

Keep in mind also that at Business Meetings where the voices of a group's individual members are heard, they are also counted. With membership in a Home Group comes the privilege of having my vote counted in matters not just affecting my own group but AA as a whole. If I belong to 3, 4, or 5 Home Groups and attend the Business Meetings of all of them and my vote is counted 3, 4 and 5 times, then I am truly abusing my rights as a member of AA as a whole.

AA is the only society this alcoholic knows of where it is truly one person – one vote. Where each member is heard at the group level, each group is heard at the district and area levels. This weekend there will be a Quarterly Assembly in Key West. It will be attended by GSRs (General Service Representatives) and DCMs (District Committee Members) as well as by others from the general AA population. The GSRs who represent their "Home Groups" and the DCMs who represent the District (as well as those groups not having GSRs in attendance) will be voting on various issues. By having inaccurate membership data, how skewed is the vote? How accurate is the count? Every April/May we sent our Delegate to New York for the Annual GSO Conference. How many alcoholics does our Delegate really represent? How fair and honest are we trying to be?

On another note, I think that sponsorship has a great deal to do with this as well. Perhaps some of you have heard of and/or witnessed this "new face of AA" phenomena. Newcomers are sponsoring newcomers. Then newcomers go out and get drunk and don't always come back. It is through knowledgeable sponsorship that the message of the "Home Group" will be carried on and that the true benefits of the new member becoming responsible to his Home Group will be achieved. The "old-timers," many of whom are complaining about and criticizing this "new face of AA," need to stop complaining and do something. They need to go back to giving what they so freely received. Perhaps then the threat of this new phenomenon will disappear as the message that saved *their* lives begins again to be heard.

Yes, being a member in ONE "Home Group" is definitely important. Why? That's simple – IT SAVES LIVES!

Dutch V.

South Vero Group





Bill K



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