

# focus



## The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

### ***focus: Anonymity is our spiritual foundation.***

Recently in Area 86 we have had a few anonymity breaks. Instances where one, or as a group, our members have had their full name and association with Alcoholics Anonymous in public media whether in print or voice. Why does A.A., ask us not to allow our identities to be publicly broadcast? The answer is both simple and complex.

The simple answer is that we need to deliver a constant message to the public at large and we need to do this through channels that should not be opened up to controversy. In the past many of the people who did indeed break their anonymity later on broke their sobriety and set us back in the general public's eye view the goodwill of our friends in public life is very important to us. We have experts in public relations working for us at GSO who have derived a message that will help us get our message of hope out to the general public but still maintain our personal anonymity. Our aim is always to try and educate our friends in the press and public as to the aims of our Program. As members we never engage in public controversy, we never take a stand on any issue of politics, religion or treatment of alcoholism. We need to do this to remain attractive to the man or woman who still struggles in the dark world of alcoholism who cannot find peace in the bottle. We do not break our anonymity so they know we will not break theirs, we do not break our anonymity so a family member or friend of an alcoholic can send their loved one here knowing that they will be safe with us.

So what about the A.A., member who breaks their own anonymity? How do they feel? Are they doing this for vainglory? Are they doing this for public recognition? In almost every case the answer is an emphatic no. In almost every case they do this as a way to help the alcoholic who still suffers. So how do they fare afterwards? Almost invariably they receive criticism within the program for doing this. There are recorded cases where these people who broke their anonymity were shunned by members who were scared they would break their anonymity. The supposed transgressors were chastised and berated for their indiscretion. Is that really the answer? No!

The answer is, as it always is in Alcoholics Anonymous, we like to educate our members, making all of our members aware how important it is that if you are approached or you are approaching an outside agency for any assistance or you are the subject of an article that will be published in one of the many forms of communication we have today, it would be wise to ask for either the participation of your local or area Public Information Committee (P.I.C.) or if you are presenting yourself to professionals who may

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***"Items of current interest or under consideration within Area 86". Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of AA as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.***

***focus:* Opinion— The opinions expressed in this article do not reflect the opinion of Area 86. If the contents of this article move you in any way I would encourage you to go to a meeting or talk with your sponsor.**

I would like to share some of my Experience, Strength and Hope with you at this time. I was indeed fortunate to have been introduced to the AA Recovery program as indicated in our "suggested" guidelines. "We" have been successful from the first day and I am grateful to you for over 20 years of continuous recovery.

The success rate of AA has greatly reduced since its inception. For instance, less than 4% of the people coming to AA achieve over 5 years of sobriety, this in comparison to 75% in the beginning. There are many factors in our increasingly changing world which also have an effect on AA,

however I would like to share some of my observations on a few things we could do under the guidelines of Recovery, Unity and Service handed to us from our founders to protect:

The use of only conference-approved literature to be read and sold at our meetings.

Tradition 6 states "An AA group ought never endorse.....". This could exclude the use of The 24 hour book as it was turned down by our General Service Conference in advisory actions of 1954, 1972 and 1977. The pamphlet Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow also was rejected as, according to AA's 12 Steps, it is suggested we "Clear away the wreckage of the past". Some newcomers are concentrating on the part "Yesterday is gone".

Alcoholics Anonymous supports a Singleness of Purpose. Tradition 7 states "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking". Alcoholics Anonymous or alcoholic is mentioned 10 times in the 12 Traditions.

Tradition 10, Long Form, states "No AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside controversial issues - particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectar-

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record in their respective journals your presentation, you would be astute to ask for the assistance of your Cooperation with the Professional Community(C.P.C.) representative. Once you have the training and information, you will be able to conduct yourself as an anonymous member, as an example of how Alcoholics Anonymous members act when able to impart our message to the world without using their own identity. Part of this training and education you will receive, will also be about educating the outside agency as to the protocol with your identity and our Eleventh and Twelfth traditions which deal directly with this subject. In my experience these outside agencies will treat your request with dignity even if they do not understand it.

***focus:* Anonymity**

Our foray into the public domain also allows us to exercise considerable humility, who wouldn't want to have their name in print? If you thought by doing so you may turn away a prospective member would you

still feel the same? So if we as an Area try to educate all of our members about anonymity at the level of press, radio and films we may save these good people consternation and still give them the opportunity to serve our program well at the level of press radio or film.

In closing I would like to say that for me, the good that came from our recent anonymity breaks, was the opportunity to try and urge all of our members that we have resources to assist you if indeed you are in the position your anonymity may be compromised and still allow you to carry out the task of having our message reach the still suffering alcoholic.

Martin A., Delegate Area 86, Panel 58

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***focus: Tradition 2 - For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority- a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.***

I thought I would do it this way :) seems we do not talk enough about this tradition. I just know through my own experience that I am just a trusted servant and I am a member of my home group where, I am just one member. Not less than or greater than.

Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers; Newcomers; Old-timers? I know that in the past I have not always been open minded and that I work on this everyday. I try to learn from our past officers and my group members and ask questions when necessary. The past can be real benefit to my sobriety.

Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility? I believe I am very trustworthy, again this has been another learning experience. After all we are the protectors of the traditions and I must do my best to try and remember again that I am just one person in A.A.

Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas? When I first got involved in service I was not sure what was happening. I have learned, over the 12 years I have been in service work, that I am doing gods will and trying to stay humble and keep the doors of A.A. open.

Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it? Yes it has been my experience over the years that I have opinions and sometimes they are not always the right ones. And if the good of A.A. is kept in mind that is the right way to go.

Although I have been sober a few years, am I willing to serve my turn at AA chores? Over the years I have done almost all jobs at my home group and I believe, that is where everyone in their home group can get active and shows the Newcomer, how A.A. works. I started my service journey cleaning ash trays. And then made a mistake of missing my home group business meeting where I was voted in as Alt GSR and god took care of the rest. My journey has been one of learning and experiencing different things in A.A. again remembering that I am just one member of A.A. and I must allow others to grow at gods plan not mine.

In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge? In the past I have. My service sponsor was part of my home group at the time and he would take me aside and say things like Alyn just keep coming back and read more about the traditions. That is what I still con-

tinue to do. I know that I am not perfect and the others are not either however in our journey together we can do our parts to make sure that the doors of A.A. and my home group are always open.

Alyn W. DCM District 2

## *Area 86 Focus*

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***"Items of current interest or under consideration within Area 86". Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of AA as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.***

**focus: Tradition Three– The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.**

*"Our membership ought to include all who suffer alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation."*

This is a sweeping statement indeed; it takes in a lot of territory. Some people might think it too idealistic to be practical. It tells every alcoholic in the world that he may become, and remain, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous *so long as he says so*. In short, Alcoholics Anonymous has no membership rule. Why is this so? Our answer is simple and practical. Even in self protection, we do not wish to erect the slightest barrier between ourselves and the brother alcoholic who still suffers. We know that society has been demanding that he conform to its laws and conventions. But the essence of his alcoholic malady is the fact that he has been unable or unwilling to conform either to the laws of man or God. If he is anything, the sick alcoholic is a rebellious nonconformist. How well we understand that; every member of Alcoholics Anonymous was once a rebel himself. Hence we cannot offer to meet him at any half-way mark. We must enter the dark cave where he is and show him that we understand. We realize that he is altogether too weak and confused to jump hurdles. If we raise obstacles, he might stay away and perish. He might be denied his priceless opportunity.....

The above was written by Bill W. in the February issue of "The Grapevine" in 1948, and the Tradition still remains unchanged today. It was so hard for me just to come to Alcoholics Anonymous, never mind qualifying in some way. We can still tell any newcomer today, there are no conditions for joining, nor do we have any dues or fees. There is no pre approval, no credit checks, and no waiting lists, no sponsors or signatures required. Our membership is self supporting. For Alcoholics Anonymous is saying, "We have something priceless to give, if only you will receive." Our responsibility that we have been entrusted with is to keep it the same, like it's always been.

Remember the struggles that we all had when we wanted to drink just as much as we wanted to stop. I could not look at myself in the mirror during this time; I did not like what I had become, nor could I figure a way out of the trouble that I was in. It was only after I made that call that things came together. "Just a simple desire to stop drinking is all you need" Jack said, and for me that alone was one of the toughest bridges to cross. Some of us have made it across, some not, and some still struggle at the edge. The Alcoholic named Jack that first talked to me that cold December morning in 1987 helped me stay on this side of that bridge. Jack became my friend, my sponsor and one of my anchors in Alcoholics Anonymous. Whose anchor will you be? Who will you help cross that bridge?

Jim W.  
DCM District 21

**focus: Daily Reflections**

*Love and tolerance of others is our code. (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 84)*

I have found that I have to forgive others in all situations to maintain any real spiritual progress. The vital importance of forgiving may not be obvious to me at first sight, but my studies tell me that every great spiritual teacher has insisted strongly upon it.

I must forgive injuries, not just in words, or as a matter of form, but in my heart. I do this not for the other persons' sake, but for my own sake. Resentment, anger, or a desire to see someone punished, are things that rot my soul. Such things fasten my troubles to me with chains. They tie me to other problems that have nothing to do with my original problem.

Pg. 88 Daily Reflections

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"The Twelve Steps, Sestina Style"  
By Janina (2002, revised 2008)

## *focus: From the heart*

A moment of clarity had I.  
It would only get worse from here.  
My desire was to end the pain.  
Strapped with fear, entering these rooms.  
No longer alone.  
Finally finding a road to freedom.

The steps will lead me to freedom.  
Continue to forge through, must I.  
Finding a sponsor, not doing this alone.  
Admitting my powerlessness from here.  
Finding a higher power within these rooms.  
The only way is through the pain.

Returning to sanity will cease the pain.  
Honesty, open mindedness, and willingness are a means to freedom.  
Turning my life over to the rooms.  
Using my will to practice these principles, shall I.  
Deciding to turn my will and life over to god from here.  
Now action is to be taken to become not alone.

Making and sharing an inventory, cease standing alone.  
Writing down all my pain.  
Sharing it with God, myself, and another leads me to the now and here.  
Feeling the past leave and so enters freedom.  
Commencement of a genuine relationship with God, man, and I.  
Discovering being connected to those in and out of the rooms.

My character defects pop up at business meetings for the rooms.  
Being ready to have them removed will lead me to no more remaining alone.  
Asking God to remove these defects from I.  
These shortcomings lead me to grow from my pain.  
Strength from weakness guides me towards freedom.  
My change in attitude starts here.

Becoming willing to make amends to those harmed, relations mend here.  
First approaching those in the rooms.  
Cleaning my side of the street, making room for freedom.  
Making amends, ending being alone.  
Letting prayer and meditation heal the pain.  
Helping others, no longer on just I.

Glad to be here because this individual is no longer alone.  
The rooms provide me with the answer for pain.  
I have found happiness, joy and freedom.

## *focus: Big Blue Book*

...Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.

Many of us keep liquor in our homes. We often need it to carry green recruits through a severe hangover. Some of us still serve it to our friends provided they are not alcoholic. But some of us think we should not serve liquor to anyone. We never argue this question. We feel that each family, in the light of their own circumstances, ought to decide for themselves.

We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for this spirit among us and is immensely relieved when he finds we are not witch burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates

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ian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever".

I would suggest as an AA member I have no opinion on Treatment Centers, pro or con, or politics and religion as these are OUTSIDE ISSUES.

A message from Bill, May 1964 Grapevine

*"Suppose, for instance, that, during the last twenty-five years, AA had never published any standard literature - no books, no pamphlets. We need little imagination to see that by now our message would be hopelessly garbled. Our relations with medicine and religion would have become a shambles. To alcoholics generally we would today be a joke and the public would have thought us a riddle. Without its literature, AA would certainly have bogged down in a welter of controversy and disunity.*

*Nevertheless, effective literature was prepared, and in 1939 the publication of the Big Book became our very first world service. From that time on, it became perfectly clear what AA is, what it believes, and how it works.*

*Millions of our pamphlets and hundreds of thousands of our books are today in circulation. AA's message can never be garbled; anyone at all can find out about us with ease. What the dividends of this single project in world communication have been, only God himself knows."*

I would like to suggest to you that if I left these matters of conditions within your household unsaid, I would be a very poor "trusted servant".

I encourage you to fulfill the intent of Tradition 7, not just with your monetary donation, but also by your active presence in your group and, if able, at your district and area levels. By doing this you will ensure your continuing recovery and the recovery of those to follow.

Remembering this excerpt from Dr. Bob's last message to AA - "KEEP IT" and that's "SIMPLE".

Our mandate should be to carry "The AA message of recovery" to the newcomer in a form as pure as humanly possible.

Please discuss this message with your group.

Your trusted servant,

Bill W, Past DCM, CW 4, District 5

## *focus: Opinion*

### ***focus: Concept Ten- Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority...***

Following an Area 86 inventory meeting in May I was asked to write an article for the newsletter on Concept Ten as in The Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W.

Ever since becoming a member of A.A., one of my commitments has been to say yes whenever anyone in our program asks for help. As a result in sobriety I've

also grown in service and always in ways that I never knew I had the time for. On this occasion though, I honestly wanted to refuse the assignment. Me, Concept Ten, how could I possibly have been mistaken for someone qualified to contribute to an idea which has thus far been so nobly advanced by our predecessors? Even as DCM I must admit I usually only refer to The A.A. Service Manual out of necessity, secure until now in my thinking that only Conference Delegates actually study the little book beyond their own job description and into the forbidden zone where it's rumored there's creepy stuff like concepts, essays, charters, and bylaws etc.

So kicking and screaming into our third legacy manual I go in search of the Twelve Concepts for World Service. I should also mention my research also included audio presentations by Bob M, David A. and

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***focus: A piece of Area 86 History***

On Sept. 26, 2007, the Dundas Group, which is the fifth oldest group in the Hamilton Area, celebrated with members and friends its 57<sup>th</sup> Group

Anniversary with a fine speaker, good food and warm hospitality.

The group, which was started by Herb B. and Johnny F., met for the first time on Monday Sept. 21, 1950 in the furnace room of the Dundas town hall. The furnace room housed some large beer kegs left over from a party the prior weekend and it wasn't long before the group decided to relocate to St. James Church on Melville street for Wednesday nights. It remained there for 55 years. Currently, the group meets for its open meeting at St. Joseph's Villa on Wednesday nights at 8:00 pm.

In November, 1998, two of the women of the group, Mary W. and Jean C., decided to add a closed discussion meeting at 6:00 pm on Saturday nights to the Dundas Group. Despite some misgivings and quips that it wouldn't last (from the men) the closed discussion meeting continues to carry the message on Sat. nights at 6:00 pm at St. Mark's Church on Lynndale Drive in Dundas.

Jean C. GSR Dundas Group.

***focus: Please send me more history of Area 86's "Old Groups"***  
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it.

Some day we hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will help the public to a better realization of the gravity of the alcoholic problem, but we shall be of little use if our attitude is one of bitterness or hostility. Drinkers will not stand for it.

After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to!

Big Book pg. 102-103

***focus: Big Blue Book***

***Focus: Estimate of Groups and Members as of January 1, 2007***

	Groups	Members
United States	53,665	1,213,269
Canada	4,874	95,443
Correctional facilities	2,432	65,357
Internationalists		65
Lone Members		227
Outside U.S. & Canada	53,590	616,899
Totals	114,561	1,989,260

*From the 2007 Final Report*

***focus: From the Editor***

**Good Day Friends. Welcome to the first edition of the Area 86 Panel 58 Newsletter. Please feel free to send me any stories you have, that are related to A. A. in Area 86. 500 words or so and we will try to get them in. It is important to note that in an effort to maintain the authors' intent, none of the articles have been or will be edited, aside from a few minor spelling or formatting errors. The only thing I would ask is that the articles keep in mind our primary purpose *Stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.* If you or your group have any questions about the newsletter, I am always available to answer them.**

**Jim C. Newsletter Chair**

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## ***focus: Concept Ten***

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Alexis K on the subject. Unfortunately or maybe fortunately for all of us Bill W cleverly constructed The Concepts so that you can't really get a grasp on one without examining the rest. Until now I have to admit I was puzzled about how and why our service structure actually works. With no central government and only a minimum of formal organization our uniquely democratic society by itself appears an utter impossibility. The key I've learned is that The Twelve Concepts protect our service structure from the Alcoholic tendency to wrestle ultimate authority from the very hands of he who has strengthened us. My interpretation of Concept Ten is that it is more or less a summary of the previous nine Concepts which are in turn based on Tradition Two which for our group purpose recognizes one ultimate authority.

"Our service structure cannot function effectively and harmoniously unless, at every level, each operational responsibility is matched by a corresponding authority to discharge it. This requires that authority must be *delegated* at every level and that the responsibility and authority of every entity are well defined and clearly understood."

"As we have seen (Concept One) "final responsibility and ultimate authority" reside with the A.A. groups, and they *delegate* this authority to the Conference (Concept Two). The Conference, in turn, *delegates* to the General Service Board the authority to manage A.A.'s affairs (Concept Three) on its behalf. The Board is in authority over its subsidiary operating conditions, A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc, but it *delegates* to the directors of those corporations the authority to run these service entities. The directors are in authority over the executives of the corporations, but *delegate* to these officers the authority needed to carry out their administrative responsibilities. And finally, the executives *delegate* to the G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members and other employees the authority necessary to carry out their important service jobs."

"It is perfectly clear," says Bill, "that when "delegated authority is operating well, it should not be constantly be interfered with." Otherwise those charged with operating responsibly will be demor-

alized." For example, the General Service Board owns the two operating corporations and it's authority over them is absolute. "Nevertheless, so long as things go well, it is highly important that the trustees do not unnecessarily interfere with or usurp the operating authority of these entities." "To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to reorganize; but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and to discharge their clear responsibilities."

So it's there for us in a nutshell and again, after learning how to say yes, this alcoholic is humbled by the rewards. I finish with a new faith that our program was born of inspired thought and forged from the hardest lessons well learned. Admittedly I began a little demoralized but it is easier now to accept that we are alcoholic and as a direct result there will always be problems in A.A. The breakthrough for me of course comes in knowing that the problems are not with the A.A. Program. Thanks to Bill's Twelve Concepts and in this case Concept Ten, we reserve enough ultimate authority to correct all but the most severe of our own crisis, and sadly we now know they too will be solved either by alcohol, by death or by rotation.

Yours in Service  
Dave M, Past DCM  
St. Clair District

### AREA OFFICERS

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