

# focus



## The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

### *Focus: What is My Loonie Worth Today?*

I was asked to do an article about the importance of individual contributions to groups, group contributions to District, and contributions down the chain of service which help us fulfill our primary purpose of carrying the message, whether at the group, district, area, or the General Service Office level.

The long form of Tradition Seven starts off by stating, *“the AA groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members...”*

This means that we must contribute enough at our home group to cover the rent, insurance, literature, GSR travel, a prudent reserve and all other expenses. We also have the responsibility to ensure that our intergroup/central office, district, area and GSO remain self-supporting, as indicated in the GREEN CARD.

It is through your contribution to your group and your group’s contributions to your district that the district is able to provide books and literature for various subcommittees including Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community, the Grapevine as well as Corrections and Treatment and it is by way of your group and district contributions to the Area that allows us to fund the subcommittees at that level. With each one of us contributing our loonies and toonies and even five and ten dollar bills, each level of service is able to function.

In 1957 Bill W. said, *“our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility – one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas and AA as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid. When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for our blessings, and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer.”*

There are several pamphlets available to all which describe in great detail the financial workings throughout Alcoholics Anonymous: The AA Group... Where it all Begins; Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix; The AA Group Treasurer; AA Guidelines to Finance; the green Self Support Card; Group Financial packages as well as contribution envelopes for Area 86, GSO and the Birthday Plan. If you are not able to find these locally, email me, call me, or see me at the Assembly and I will make sure that you get them.

Mary Kelly, Area 86 Panel 60 Treasurer

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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:***  
***The Role of the Archives***

From our humble beginnings we all wanted to know where we come from, why we are here and what our purpose is. From time immemorial Archives have been the syllabus or building blocks for our families, society, culture and our fellowship. Who are they, what are they and, more importantly, what is it that Archives represent?

The origin of the term **Archives** comes from the Greek term arkheion, meaning town hall and also from arkhe meaning government," - literally the beginning, origin or first place.

Alcoholics Anonymous has a first place too, in its gloried beginnings in the mid-thirties, when Bill W, Dr. Bob, Ebby and Dr. Silkworth, along with an assorted cast of contributing characters, helped build the fellowship as it stands today. Sensing the value of Archives in the role of the fellowship, Bill W writes, "*We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian*" and "*it is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion.*"

The aim, Bill writes is to "*keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full length history to come.*"

I believe what Bill is saying is that full length history is never quite upon us as we keep creating Archives of our own. We do so because AA is people in a selfless weave of caring relationships whose inter-relationships create a system of ritual that we enact in our daily lives; thus infusing the secular with sacred dimensions. Archives or Archival information provides us with institutional memory, can help capture the "essence" of the moment, helps us differentiate between myth and fact and ensures uniformity of message in times of change.

As we have discovered in our own personal journeys, falling leaves return to their roots. It is no different for our fellowship. You too can be a part of the great ongoing history of AA.

Dan D  
Archives Chair  
Area 86 Panel 60

**Short form:**

*Alcoholics Anonymous  
has no opinion on outside issues;  
hence the A.A. name ought never  
be drawn into public controversy.*

**Long Form:**

*No A.A. group or member should ever,  
in such a way as to implicate A.A.,  
express any opinion on outside controversial issues -  
particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion.  
The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one.  
Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.*

Tradition 10 says to me that by not expressing opinions on "outside issues," we hope to avoid controversy, both publically and within the fellowship itself. This policy also helps members keep the focus on our common purpose.

If this tradition is followed, it works to keep the fellowship as a whole from engaging in public controversy but the principal can also be applied to "all the affairs" of individual members.

If you would like more information on Tradition 10 or any other of the Traditions, you will find information in the book "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", in the pamphlet "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated", or talk to your sponsor about them.

Yours in Service,

Mary B.  
DCM, District 14 Sarnia- Lambton

***Focus:***  
***Tradition Ten***

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## *Focus: The Second Promise*

### ***We will know a new freedom and a new happiness.***

There's an old AA joke that says if you want to hide something from an alcoholic, put it in the **Big Book**. So, naturally, in my early sobriety it took me some time to find the *Promises* in the **Big Book**. There should be another joke that says if you want to keep a secret from an alcoholic, tell it to his sponsor because when I started to ask around, one member finally suggested that perhaps that's exactly who I should ask!

Good idea, I thought, and knowing my sponsor had great knowledge of the **Big Book**, I asked him about the *Promises*. "They're in the book," was all he said. Time and time again I asked him why I couldn't find them and time and time again he'd laugh and say, "Read the book!" I read the **Big Book**, then phoned him, complaining I still couldn't find them. "Read it again," was all he said. I won't tell you what I said; children may be reading.

I must have been ready, because when I read the book again and reached page 83 the *Promises* jumped right out at me. I got so excited I phoned my sponsor again to tell him my good news. "That's too bad," he replied. "I've just found a book-mark with all the *Promises* written on it." Still, he did give me credit for stubbornness, and said he was grateful I found them and that I should pass the good news around.

I was sober five or six years and I began to realize I felt different. I felt free of self. And I was certainly a happier person to be around, whether I was at home or at a meeting. I can't say that it was a direct result of the *Ninth Step*. It was more a result of all of the work I had done up to that point. In fact I don't think I'd done the *Ninth* yet – it took my sponsor a long time to get me into doing the Steps. I lived 'religiously' with the 'mini-steps.' The Slogans and I were on the same page. I could do the Slogans without any problem, but to do the Steps, I had a problem. I don't know why, other than to admit I wasn't ready.

### *Area 86 / Focus*

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***Focus:***  
**Conference-Approved  
A.A. Literature**

Alcoholics Anonymous World Service lost the copyright of 'The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous' in 1989 because they did not apply for copyright renewal after 50 years (required in U.S. but not in Canada). Therefore, in the process, they also lost rights to exclusive use of the symbol of the Triangle and Circle.

Copyrights are still in force on The Big Book in Canada. **Therefore, copies of The Big Book from other publishing companies are copyright infringement in Canada.**

When ANYONE publishing literature in USA wishes to quote from A.A. Conference-Approved literature, permission may or may not be given by A.A. World Service because they have lost the Sole RIGHTS of The Big Book (now considered to be FREE DOMAIN in the U.S.). A.A. literature specifically states 'This is A.A. General Service Conference-Approved literature'.

Our yearly conference in New York includes a Literature Committee. All of A.A.'s literature, additions to, approvals, and deletions must pass through this committee and the Trustees who are the guardians of A.A. Traditions. If necessary, on large issues, this information is brought back to all of Alcoholics Anonymous for consideration.

I, as a member of A.A., will continue to support in every way the purchase and use of Conference-Approved Literature. Some of the **NON**-Conference-Approved booklets may be helpful to some individuals, just **do not** use the name of Alcoholics Anonymous in connection with them as this constitutes **endorsement**.

Publishers of NON-Conference-Approved Literature include:

Faith with Works Publishing, "*Back to Basics*"

The Anonymous Press, "*The Anonymous Press Study Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous*"

and others.

This is submitted in respect of Alcoholics Anonymous and our founders who, through many early members and advisors, "all under the watchful eye of a Loving God" formulated our beloved program of Recovery, Unity and Service.

This was 20 years in the making, and was given in 1955 to members to protect by introducing the Conference Structure.

A.A.'s shortest prayer – *God Help Us*.

Bill W.  
The Paisley A.A. Group

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## *Focus: We don't have to drink to die*

We buried him yesterday. The County Coroner had published the required notices for next of kin and nobody had claimed the body. It was just me and his sponsor, not even a preacher attended (the county doesn't pay for those). Not much of a send-off, and not the one David had asked for. A cheap coffin, a backhoe to dig a hole, and that was it - another old A.A. member gone.

He had been sober over 20 years and in A.A. over 30; a stern and rigid man who tried to soften his edges and never could. He was a loner, an isolated man at the edge of life's good things. He hung in there... and in the end hung himself. I don't know why. I can't know. I know there had been a diagnosis of senile dementia and I know that the doctor had added cancer to the list. I've seen A.A.'s deal with such things before. I don't know why David decided he couldn't.

It isn't the first time I've been through this in Alcoholics Anonymous. I've known several over the years who just up and walked out life's door one day. Sober, but not happy. Sober, but not at peace. Sober, but they died of alcoholism. Our disease doesn't need us to drink in order to kill us. I wish more folks knew that and appreciated it.

Alcoholism is the only disease that is entirely capable of fighting back, of taking care of it, and of emerging in new places and new forms when it isn't properly treated. That's because of the spiritual malady. Most people think that has something to do with prayer or with God. It doesn't. It has to do with 'our spirit' - that force which animates, motivates and propels us.

As an alcoholic, my spirit is ill. It is flawed. My character, or basic nature, doesn't work right. At its root, it is a fundamental and irresolvable insecurity - a hole that can't ever be filled. It is an instinct run rampant, a desperate need for acceptance and love that cannot be met. It hurts. It fills one with fear. The selfishness and self-centeredness of the alcoholic lies here. We are totally preoccupied with what is going on with ourselves on the inside. The slings and arrows of experience warped by this need drive us to the fringe and the voices of the committee in our head keep us there. We are obsessed with ourselves and from this condition of mind—the insanity of feelings gone haywire, we eventually become self-medicators. We discover alcohol or something else and the stuff quiets the voices and provides the relief we've never been able to find in any other way. It isn't any wonder we drink or drug the way we do. And some of us don't develop an addiction in attempting to meet these crying demands of our spirit become ill. Instead, we develop other malformations of behavior and suffer in a hundred different other ways.

God broke David's obsession to drink but I don't think David ever truly understood his disease. I say that because I watched him struggle with those old unresolved issues of his heart for years. His rigidity, coldness, aloofness, isolation and difficulty with other people were a reflection of the pain in his heart and of the disease of alcoholism gone deep inside that remained active. Alcoholism didn't need David to drink in order to continue trying to kill him. In the end it succeeded. In the end, instead of self abandonment, David abandoned hope and discovered a bitter end.

Our recovery from alcoholism through the Steps must be a three-fold process. It is not one dimensional. When we say in AA, that we have a triangle... recovery, unity, service... we mean it.

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In working the Steps, I clear a pathway for two purposes. First, to come into a group of human people and away from the fringe of society where I have spent most of my emotional life. Second, to discover 'belonging' through service to the people within that group. It is only this entire, threefold process that heals. It is especially true for those of us who suffer from the spiritual malady to a great degree. Perhaps the 12th Step says it best: "*Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps (recovery), we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics (service) and practice these principles in all our affairs (unity).*"

### ***Focus: We don't have to drink to die (continued)***

You see, I cannot hold back. I must not continue to suffer that shyness, aloneness, that overwhelming sense of self in my affairs. I must get involved in a group of people to practice these principles in all my affairs. Only the total approach is healing. Anything less is little more than driving my disease deep and if I do that it will continue to eat away, trying to destroy me as it destroyed David.

This is a memorial to an old AA who gave his best shot. I think David ended up on the plus side. It wasn't his fault; he seemed to have been born that way. There were a lot of old ideas about self that David could never muster the willingness to let go of. He is at rest now. But it says somewhere that "no matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others."

David cannot speak to his experience any longer; I am speaking in his memory. And I think that if David could talk to us today, he'd say "Understand your disease thoroughly, and work the complete program of recovery!"

God Bless!  
Anonymous Submission

### ***Focus: The Second Promise (continued)***

So what brought the thought to mind that I was suddenly feeling freer and happier? I was at a meeting in Mildmay one night about ten years ago

and Bill S. Jr. was there talking about the freedom he gets when he "stands guard at the portals of his thoughts," a concept he had learned from another AA years before that. At first I didn't understand what he was getting at but he talked about the release he gets when he's now fighting old or new battles in his mind. On the drive home what he was saying suddenly began to make sense. I realized that the war was over and that I didn't have to fight battles any more.

These promises are there for us if we work for them and for several years now they've been coming true for me, one at a time. I help as many suffering alcoholics as I can today. I can only share what has happened in my life and I love watching people grow and get what I've been given, one day at a time.

There is no greater freedom and happiness than freedom from the bondage of self-will run riot. The day I found out that these *Promises* will come true *if we work for them* was my day of liberation.

Jim MacL.  
Easy Does It Group  
Walkerton, Ont.

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# UNITY DAY

AREA 86



AREA 83

Join us Saturday, September 17, 2011  
for a full day of

**RECOVERY - UNITY - SERVICE**

*with*

**THE VERY REV. WARD EWING, D.D.**

CHAIRMAN OF THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
CLASS A (NON-ALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEE

HOLY MARTYRS OF JAPAN CHURCH  
167 Essa Street, Bradford, Ontario

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## ***Focus: Articles Wanted***

If you or any one in your District would like to submit an article for an upcoming Focus Newsletter, please contact The Newsletter/Website Chair, Janis V. or email them to:

[thegatekeepers@wightman.ca](mailto:thegatekeepers@wightman.ca)

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## ***Focus: My Name is Phil and I am an Alcoholic***

Growing up was very painful. About the only one who seemed to love me and try to help me grow up "normally"

was my dad. I really had no relationship with my brother, a surface relationship with my sister and, for years, I hated my mother. When my dad passed in 1995, I promised him I would do my best to look after my mom and it's been a real struggle at times. My brother and I don't talk to each other. I try to keep a solid relationship with my sister but that's hard to do right now with her health issues. Amazingly, am slowly building a good relationship with my mom.

As a teen, I hurt so much inside that I started to drink and act out and wanted for years to die. You know what they say: we hurt the ones we love the most. My actions caused deep wounds for my grandparents. I heard one day in public school that the world was going to come to an end in the year 2,000. That day, I gave up on life. Why try to make something of yourself if the world is going to end? From age 17-18, I was having major problems with booze and I ended up going to treatment in St. Thomas for 28 days but my downfall was my thinking as I was planning my life months ahead.

I tried AA at that point but didn't stay. A little while later, after run-ins with the cops, I went back to treatment to write the same story. This time A.A. offended me. I would sit beside an AA member in the bar on Saturday night and then go to a meeting on Sunday night. This same guy would get up and speak about his years of sobriety. So again, I left the program. Around mid-summer 1989 I went to treatment at Brentwood in Windsor where I was a scared little boy who acted out and left at one point only to come back a few weeks later. After coming out of Brentwood in early 1990 I saw an addictions worker weekly and white knuckled it for a while.

A couple years later, I was back at St. Thomas for 28 days. I stayed sober for a short time. After a short relapse I took the tools from the Program and my Addiction worker and managed to stay Sober for 10 years without A.A.. At this point I had moved back to my home town to be closer to my mom. One day, after almost getting into a rage, I threw my hands up and drank which pretty much up until 2008 when I spent months deciding if I was worth going back to treatment. Finally, I decided to try one more time, all this time seeing a addictions worker and being introduced to a great shrink, new family doctor and a mental health worker. In Sept. 2008, after being sober since July of that year, I went to treatment in Simcoe with a whole different outlook and attitude, which was one of the best things I ever did. I was reintroduced to A.A. and, having had a positive experience, I worked hard on my day program there and attended at least 3 or 4 meeting per week. When I finished and came home I didn't go to AA for 3 months until I met my dear friend, Peggy, whom I believe God sent.

I agreed to go with her to a Lucan meeting. The feeling of love, honesty and caring was great. I joined the group that night. FINALLY, I was home. I struggled a lot in my first year of sobriety but with a lot of love and guidance from my home group, I began to grow. I went to at least 5 meetings per week, got a sponsor and was willing to listen and try things in a different way. In the fall of 2008 I learned to pray, mediate and came to accept myself and other people as they are. A few months after my first year, I felt I needed to get more involved in A.A. so when the position came up, I asked if I could be GSR and was given the gift of serving my group. Being a good little drunk, I went to my first District meeting and was amazed once again by how I was treated. The second District position I stood for was PI/CPC and was acclimated.

All this didn't come easy, . I have had many challenges such as poor self-esteem and lack of confidence in my self. Service day was the second time where I have felt the deep love and acceptance as a member.

Phil

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