

# One Day at a Time(s)

24 Hollywood Blvd. SW, Suite 7—Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548  
"Happy, Joyous and Free!"  
www.fwb-area-aa.org (850) 244-2421



## Tradition Four

**The fourth of a new series of articles explaining The Twelve Traditions. . . Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.**

AUTONOMY is a ten-dollar word. But in relation to us, it means very simply that every AA group can manage its affairs exactly as it pleases, except when AA as a whole is threatened. Comes now the same question raised in Tradition One. Isn't such liberty foolishly dangerous?

Over the years every conceivable deviation from our Twelve Steps and Traditions has been tried. That was sure to be, since we are so largely a band of ego-driven individualists. Children of chaos, we have defiantly played with every brand of fire, only to emerge unharmed and, we think, wiser. These very deviations created a vast process of trial and error which, under the grace of God, has brought us to where we stand today.

When AA's Traditions were first published in 1945, we had become sure that an AA group could stand almost any amount of battering. We saw that the group, exactly like the individual, must eventually conform to whatever tested principles would guarantee survival. We had discovered that there was perfect safety in the process of trial and error. So confident of this had we become that the original statement of AA tradition carried this significant sentence: "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that as a group they have no other affiliation."

This meant, of course, that we had been given the courage to declare each AA group an individual entity, strictly reliant on its own conscience as a guide to action. In charting this enormous expanse of freedom we found it necessary to post only two storm signals. A group ought not do anything which would greatly injure AA as a whole, nor ought it affiliate itself with anything or anybody else. There would be real danger should we commence to call some groups "wet," others "dry," still others "Republican" or "Communist," and yet others "Catholic" or "Protestant." The AA group would have to stick to its course or be hopelessly lost. Sobriety had to be its sole objective. In all other respects there was perfect freedom of will and action. Every group had the right to be wrong.

When AA was still young, lots of eager groups were forming. In a town we'll call Middleton, a real crackerjack had started up. The townspeople were hot as firecrackers about it. Star-gazing, the elders dreamed of innovations. They figured the town needed a great big alcoholic center, a kind of pilot plant AA groups could duplicate everywhere. Beginning on the ground floor there would be a club; in the second story they would sober up drunks and hand them currency for their back debts; the third deck would house an educational project. . .quite noncontroversial, of course. In imagination the gleaming center was to go up several stories more, but three would do for a start. This would all take a lot of money. . .other people's money. Believe it or not, wealthy townfolk bought the idea.

There were, though, a few conservative dissenters among the alcoholics. They wrote the Foundation, AA's headquarters in New York, wanting to know about this sort of streamlining. They understood that the elders, just to nail things down good, were about to apply to the Foundation for a charter. These few were disturbed and skeptical.

Of course there was a promoter in the deal. . .a super-promoter. By his eloquence he allayed all fears, despite advice from the Foundation that it could issue no charter, and that ventures which mixed an AA group up with medication and education had come to sticky ends elsewhere. To make things safer, the promoter organized three corporations and became president of them all. Freshly painted, the new center shone. The warmth of it all



## Step 4

**Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves"**

### 4th Tradition

**"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole"**

### Concept IV:

*At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional "Right of Participation," allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.*



### Inside this issue:

<b>Tradition 4</b>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>Step Four</b>	<b>2-3</b>
<b>Grapevine</b>	<b>3-4</b>
<b>Sunshine Convention</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Birthdays</b>	<b>6</b>

spread through the town. Soon things began to hum. To insure foolproof, continuous operation, 61 rules and regulations were adopted.

But alas, this bright scene was not long in darkening. Confusion replaced serenity. It was found that some drunks yearned for education, but doubted if they were alcoholics. The personality defects of others could be cured maybe with a loan. Some were club-minded, but it was just a question of taking care of the lonely heart. Sometimes the swarming applicants would go for all three floors. Some would start at the top and come through to the bottom, becoming club members, others started in the club, pitched a binge, were hospitalized, then graduated to education on the third floor. It was a beehive of activity, all right, but unlike a beehive, it was confusion compounded. An AA group, as such, simply couldn't handle this sort of a project. All too late that was discovered. Then came the inevitable explosion. . . something like that day the boiler burst in Wombly's Clapboard Factory. A chill choke-damp of fear and frustration fell over the group.

When that lifted, a wonderful thing had happened. The head promoter wrote the Foundation office. He said he wished he'd paid some attention to AA experience. Then he did something else that was to become an AA classic. It all went on a little card about golf-score size. The cover read: "Middleton Group No. One. Rule No. 62." Once the card was unfolded, a single pungent sentence leaped to the eye: "Don't take yourself too damn seriously."

Thus it was that under Tradition Four an AA group had exercised its right to be wrong. Moreover, it had performed a great service for Alcoholics Anonymous, because it had been humbly willing to apply the lessons it learned. It had picked itself up with a laugh and gone on to better things. Even the chief architect, standing in the ruins of his dream, could laugh at himself. . . and that is the very acme of humility. Bill W., Grapevine, August 1952, Vol 9, No 3.

#### ***Step 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves***

JUST to show how easy it is to take somebody *else's* inventory, here's a little story. Some time ago I visited my old group, noticed a rift between a wealthy retired clique and some working stiffs, and suggested it was time to take group inventory. There quickly descends on my head the wrath of an old-timer, eighteen years dry. His neck red and cheeks mottled, he demanded to know how I could have the effrontery to criticize this group.

It was easy for me to see that he could have corrected me without the flare-up. Having disposed of the group's and the old-timer's short-comings, I thought of doing a little Step-Four job on my own. Before long, the flaws of the others seemed puny by comparison.

Step Four is, in this one man's view, the hardest, trickiest, most dangerous and most perplexing of all the Steps. It is the threshold to self-knowledge; without

crossing it one can never enter the castle of serenity. Yet one can stumble on it and fall into the moat of despair. Many "cafeteria-style" AAs, who advocate helping yourself to such Steps as you have an appetite for, fight shy of it. The Big Book, however, considers it so important that it gives Step Four more pages (seven) than are allotted to any other Step.

When I first came into AA fourteen years ago it was Step Four, more than anything else, that called a halt to my constant complaining and blaming my woes on others. It set me to scrubbing up my own behavior. Seven years later, I saw Step Four as the pivot on which we are turned from being a problem to society toward being a help with society's problems. Writing "The Twelve Steps and the Older Member" in these pages seven years ago, I discovered through Step Four that "We are not the only sick people in the world! There are others, and they need our help! With this realization we end our spiritual retreat and begin our advance."

Now the question arises, have the *last* seven years taught me anything further about Step Four? I think they have, and would list these things: The Need of a New Self-Image; the Meaning of the Word "Moral"; the Source of Fear; the Road Block: Self-Reliance; the Trap: Self-Accusation; the Importance of Writing It Down.

The founders of AA attached great importance to *writing our inventory down on paper*. We can't stay sober unless we do something about the behavior that so antagonized people. To do this we must examine ourselves the bad parts as well as the good. The human mind tends to exclude attention to anything bad about itself. Paper, however, ignores mental whimsy. Once it's written down it stays--a helpful reminder and a goad to complete an unfinished job.

So, practicing a little of what I'm preaching, I'll write down a little of my current inventory. Bear in mind that the title of this series is "The Twelve Steps Revisited." It's something for the older guy and gal, mainly, and has to do with some of the problems of getting on in AA, and in years.

When I take inventory these days, the most persistent of the useless items found is an outdated self-image. As a young man I was a flat-bellied, lean-jawed, wavy-haired egotist, more or less constantly, and more or less successfully, on the make. I married late in my twenties, after years of thinking of myself as a handsome rogue. I am appalled at the persistence of self-images formed when we were young. Today I am no longer handsome and trying hard *not* to be a rogue. My paunch cannot be concealed, a bag of wrinkled skin resembling a turkey's wattle is forming under my chin, my hair is almost white, and attractive young women always call me "Sir." Yet, in spite of myself, the old habit of wanting to play juvenile heroes persists; there are times when, compulsively, I think of myself as an up-and-coming young man.

Years of inventory-taking have taught me that an unrealistic self-image is a prime source of fear and resentment. When we live in a sand castle made of fantasy, or of memories of yesteryear, waves of truth are always threatening to wash it away. The impending loss of our stronghold makes us fearful. Resentfully, we defend it against the rising tide of reason. However, the minute I adjust my self-image to what I really am--a middle-aged alcoholic, grateful for his recovery and aware of his limited importance--fear and resentment begin to dissolve. When my notions about myself are in line with the truth about myself, I am relatively at peace.

I think that understanding this has helped me to be a little more patient with other people. The old-timer who got sore when I suggested a group inventory is a case in point. Rich, distinguished-looking and retired, he had become a little smug in his AA cocoon. He thought of the group as a band of angels living in perfect harmony, with himself presiding benignly as chief angel. Scared when his illusion was threatened, he resentfully denied that dissension existed. My guess is that he'll simmer down when he begins to see himself and the group as we really are--a group of former drunks still short of sainthood. As for myself, I'm beginning to see that I could have proposed the group inventory more tactfully.

In the past seven years I have come to a new idea about the meaning of "moral." I used to be afraid of that word. It had an accusing quality that made me cringe. I now see that it has to do with my own notion of my reason for being on earth. If I'm doing what I think I'm for, I'm moral. If not, I'm immoral.

People, I have found, can have all sorts of ideas about what they're for, therefore all sorts of moralities. To the hedonistic philosopher, the highest morality is to have a good time. As I have worked it out, with AA's help, a Higher Power is busy at something called evolution, which is mainly helping creatures, including myself, to improve. I conceive my purpose in life to be cooperating in this work. So, when I take a "moral" inventory, I judge my actions on a basis of whether they help or hinder someone in this journey toward becoming something better.

When I was small, I was severely scolded or beaten up when I did something wrong. In taking some of my early inventories I tended to raise hob with myself when I discovered obvious character defects. This, I eventually learned, was the

self-castigation that leads to despair, not the self-examination that leads to improvement. I now believe that the greatest defects are intolerance and unforgiveness. We have to leave the door open for good-humored acceptance of our shortcomings, once we've discovered them, as a preliminary to getting rid of them. Self-scolding only makes us miserable.

There is good reason for us to be self-forgiving. Some of our worst character defects were not of our own making, but were taught by social custom from our birth. All the slogans that make for self-centeredness--Paddle Your Own Canoe; God Helps Those Who Help Themselves; Stand On Your Own Two Feet; Get Ahead; The Early Bird Gets the Worm; Devil Take the Hindmost; Freedom of Choice--were hammered into us from childhood and taught as high virtues. Little wonder that we turn out to be inconsiderate of others. Little wonder that we have trouble changing, once we decide to try to be a little more friendly, a little more human. I have come to think that I have relatively little freedom of choice and action, and very little power of my own. What matters in Step Four, I believe, is how we use what little power we have.

Seen in this way, there is nothing about Step Four to be afraid of. That being the case, we can make an inventory that is really fearless, as well as really searching. And we ought to write it down.

J. E. Grapevine, September 1961, Vol 18, No. 4

### Could I Get Sober In AA Today?

W. M. Madison, NJ—Grapevine, Dec 1988

One shaky, guilt-ridden morning after, I promised myself that if I were to get drunk just one more time I would "enter" Alcoholics Anonymous. It had been suggested to me some years earlier that I try AA, but I never really considered it until that morning. A couple of days later I was drunk again.

It was then, I believe, that my Higher Power came into play. I remembered my promise and asked my wife to call AA. A few days later a meeting book came in the mail. I found a men's Step meeting about a half hour's drive away, and went. One week later I took what I hope was my last drink.

That was about eleven years ago, when I was in my early forties, and I have been going to AA ever since.

I firmly believe that the men at that men's Step meeting saved my life. All of us have since moved on to other meetings or other parts of the country. Some have died. But what struck me at that first meeting and so many subsequent ones was that here were people who had felt the same sense of helplessness and hopelessness about drinking that I did. But they had managed to stop, by practicing the principles of AA.

If those men, who were so much like me and with whom I could identify so easily, could get sober, then there was hope that I, too, could. And, following their example, I did.

That, as I said, was some eleven years ago. Much has changed about AA since then, at least in the area where I live. Most meetings now are increasingly populated with young people who identify themselves as addicts and secondly, if at all, as alcoholics. More often than not, their stories of addiction end in their late

**Events for  
April 2011**

**Intergroup Mtg** 9:30 am Sun  
**Breakfast Amvets** April 3rd

**District 14 GSR** 6:30 pm Mon  
**Meeting Amvets** April 4th

**Intergroup Bus** 6:30 pm Mon  
**Meeting** April 18th

**One Day at a Times is published  
by District 14 periodically for  
your enjoyment and  
information.**

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the editorial staff and contributors - not necessarily of the AA ® Fellowship as a whole. AA® and Alcoholics Anonymous® are registered trademarks of A. A. World Services, Inc.

**Published by District 14  
Intergroup Committee,**

**District 14 Intergroup Committee,  
Inc.  
24 Hollywood Blvd. SW, Ste 7  
Fort Walton Beach, FL 325480**

**Phone: (850) 244-2421  
www.fwb-area-aa.org  
EditorODAT@hotmail.com**



**GRAPEVINE** "... a magic carpet on which each of you can ride to the more distant reaches and watch new brothers and sisters emerge from darkness into light." Bill W., 1959, referring to the AA Grapevine.

**Subscribe to Grapevine**  
**Select which type of subscription (s) to Grapevine Magazine you would prefer:**

- Grapevine Print \$26.97 1yr
- Digital Archive \$26.97 1yr
- Magazine Digital \$19.97 1yr
- Audio Grapevine \$19.97 1yr



teens or early twenties, when my story of drinking only began. They tell of their lives with marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and other drugs about which I know nothing.

Their antagonists frequently are their parents. My parents are long dead, and I was married, had children and had been living on my own for a quarter century when I sobered up. Nearly all these young people have been through rehabilitation centers. My only experience with a rehab was to serve at one as a volunteer.

I am sure that many of them experienced some of the same feelings that I did when I drank, but like so many of the rest of us they prefer to tell horror stories and talk about their encounters with the law than to recall how they "felt" about their addiction.

In short, I don't identify with these young people. I wish them well. I hope they get and keep straight. But I cannot help but wonder if I were to come into AA now and encounter so much talk about narcotics by people too young to have shared my generation's life experiences, could I get sober in AA today? I don't think I could, although I'm sure--or at least I hope--that many people my age still do. I can only speak for myself.

I am sure that many readers will not like what I have said and they will take reassurance in the belief that the fault, if any exists, is my own. Perhaps. But AA is a selfish program, as we all know, and my primary concern is for my sobriety. And I don't mind saying that I'm scared. I want to stay sober and I need AA for that.

I recently did something I never did before in my years in AA. I walked out in the middle of a speakers' meeting after listening for 45 minutes to a young person describe his bout with narcotics. As I left I realized that another man about my age had also just left. A minute later, another man walked into the parking lot, and another was a few steps behind him. I chatted with one of them, a man with slightly more time in AA than me, and his lament was mine: I can't take any more of this talk about narcotics.

**Is the solution to form an alcoholics branch of  
Alcoholics Anonymous?**



*First Annual*  
**SUNSHINE CONVENTION**  
**MAY 20 = 22, 2011**

Crestview Community Center  
1446 Commerce Dr.  
Crestview, Florida.

**\*\*\* THREE PERTINENT IDEAS \*\*\* a. b. c.**

FRIDAY: 4:00 PM = AA TEXT BOOK

6:00 PM = JAMES M. AA OF BREAUX BRIDGE, LA.

8:00 PM = WALTER IL. AA OF WOODLANDS, TEXAS

SATURDAY: 9:00 AM = TIM D. AA OF OPP, ALABAMA

10:30 AM = WORKSHOP (EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY)

1:30 PM = NANCY B. AL-ANON OF DENTON, TEXAS

3:00 PM = NANCY M. AA OF MPLS. MINNESOTA

8:00 PM = JOHNNIE H. AA OF LAGUNA BEACH, CA.

SUNDAY: 10:00 AM = SANDY B. AA OF TAMPA, FLORIDA



VOICE = CHIP B. AA OF CRESTVIEW, FLORIDA

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY THROUGHOUT THE CONVENTION

(ALL MEALS PROVIDED)

RAFFLE & 50/50

PRE-REGISTRATION = \$25.00 BY MAY 10, 2011

REGISTRATION AT THE DOOR = \$30.00

VENDERS ALLOWED PLEASE CONTACT BY E-MAIL: [SUNSHINECONVENTION@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:SUNSHINECONVENTION@HOTMAIL.COM)

HOST HOTEL: COUNTRY INN & SUITES \$75.00 @ night mention Sunshine Convention (850)306-2020

Econo Lodge :=(850)682-6255 Jameson Inn:= (850)683-1778 Quality Inn:= (850)682-6111

Super 8 Motel :=(850)682-9649 Hampton Inn := (850)689-2378

CD & DJ BY JAMES SERENITY TAPE

*PRE-REGISTRATION Please Clip and Mail To:*

*Sunshine Convention, P.O. Box 1404, Crestview, FL 32536*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AA or AL-ANON

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL: [sunshineconvention@hotmail.com](mailto:sunshineconvention@hotmail.com)



(CHECK PAY TO: SUNSHINE CONVENTION)

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

Happy



Birthday!

**Brownbagger's Group**

Andrew D.	4/28/10	1 Year
Gail D.	4/25/08	3 Years
Donna F.	4/5/08	3 Years
Chris M.	4/19/79	32 Years
Mary Lou C.	4/30/90	21 Years
John D.	4/11/04	7 Years
Marilyn M.	4/1/08	3 Years
Jimmy S.	4/15/08	3 Years

**Primary Purpose Group**

Carolina M.	4/26/04	7 Years
Dianne L.	4/11/78	33 Years
Gayle G.	4/25/08	3 Years
JW T.	4/19/88	23 Years
Celeste H.	3/10/10	1 Year
Kim O.	3/24/05	6 Years
Kimberly D.	8/1/92	19 Years

**Crestview Monday Night BB Group**

Tina H.	4/20/02	9 Years
Tammy P.	4/22/08	3 Years
Laurie W.	4/29/03	8 Years

**Straight Up Group**

Sam T.	4/4/07	4 Years
Mike M.	4/11/92	19 Years
Randy B.	4/18/05	6 Years
Jeanne V.	4/28/82	29 Years
Lynn M.	4/29/10	1 Year

**The Men's Group**

Juan C.	3/07	4 Years
---------	------	---------

**Miracle Group**

Dale O.	4/21/02	9 Years
---------	---------	---------

**Second Chance Group**

WJ C.	4/10/05	6 Years
Kevin C.	4/13/07	4 Years

