

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



Step 2
“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

AA's Basic Text

Box 459 - Vol. 55, No. 4 / Fall

The year was 1939. Hedy Lamarr, Rita Hayworth, Lana Turner and Greta Garbo were the country's pin-up queens. "There's no place like home" and "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn" were the most popular quotes from the most popular films released that year, The Wizard of Oz and Gone With the Wind, which won the Oscar for Best Film. Germany invaded Poland, signaling the official beginning of World War II. The World's Fair opened in New York City with the theme, "Building for the World of Tomorrow," and a time capsule was buried which is not to be opened until the year 6939. Robert May, an employee of Montgomery Ward, created the story of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer as a Christmas promotional gimmick. Batman made his comic book debut. The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck, was published. And the Yankees won the World Series. But, to a hardy band of 100 or so alcoholics, trying against all odds to hold onto their sobriety, doubtless the most important thing to happen in 1939, for them and for the countless alcoholics to come, was the appearance, in print, of Alcoholics Anonymous, the book that bore the name of the society of recovering drunks it represented. "We of Alcoholics Anonymous," says the foreword to the first edition, "are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book."

Plagued by high expectations, foundering with dissension, chronically underfunded and dashed by one mishap after another, it is truly a wonder that the book was ever published; a miraculous event, according to some, dependent on a perfect storm of people, places and things.

The story of A.A.'s basic text—how it was written, published and promoted—is a story too long to recount in detail here. Yet, like the story of the Fellowship it represents, it is a story of how, through many failures, the seeds of success were sown. The story, told in detail by Bill W. in Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age and The Language of the Heart, is the story of a truly alcoholic venture—a plan so crazy and improbable, as some would say, "it might just work."

As Bill W. wrote in a July 1947 article titled "Book Publication Proved Discouraging Venture," reprinted in The Language of the Heart, describing the dilemma the fledgling Fellowship found itself in once the book had been printed, but had no takers, "What were we to do with those other thousands of books? What could we say to the printer, whose bill wasn't half paid? What about that little loan of \$2,500 and those forty-nine subscribers who had invested \$4,500 in Works Publishing stock? How could we break the awful news to them? How could we tell them that since we had no publicity we could sell no books? Yes, that A.A. book venture was, I fear, very alcoholic!"

The desire to write and publish a book of their own experiences in the adventure of getting—and staying—sober came out of a recognition by Bill and co-founder Dr. Bob,



2nd Tradition

"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."

Concept II: The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

Do we have an understanding of the history of the General Service Conference (the "Conference")?

What is a Conference Advisory Action? Does our home group's G.S.R., D.C.M., area delegate report back to the group on the highlights of the Conference and Conference Advisory Actions?

· Is our group meeting its wider Seventh Tradition responsibilities?

Inside this issue:

AA Basic Text	1-3
Step Two	3-5
Events	5
Financial Info	6-7
Birthdays	8

that in order to keep the message intact and pass it on to the countless alcoholics out there who were waiting for some kind of help, they needed to codify what they and the early members had done and to explain the program in specific terms. In a talk he gave at a banquet in Fort Worth, Texas, in June 1954, Bill W. recalled how it all came about:

“On a late fall afternoon in 1937, Smithy [Dr. Bob] and I were talking together in his living room.” By then, the groups in Akron and New York were firmly established, “and the thing had leaked a little over into Cleveland and it began to move south from New York. But it was still flying blind—a flickering candle indeed, because it might at any minute be snuffed out. So we began counting noses. How many people had stayed dry in Akron, in New York, maybe a few in Cleveland? And when we added up that score, it was a handful, 35 to 40 maybe. But enough time had elapsed on enough really fatal cases of alcoholism that Bob and I foresaw for the first time that this thing was going to succeed.

“I can never forget the elation and ecstasy that seized It had taken three years to sober up the handful, and there had been an immense amount of failure. How could this handful carry its message to all those who still didn’t know? Not all the drunks in the world could come to Akron or to New York. How could we transmit our message to them?” The two began mulling over the possibilities. Bill, always the entrepreneur, had big ideas. He wanted to create a chain of hospitals to sober up thousands of drunks and to send out missionaries to spread the word.

“And, we reflected, we’d have to get some kind of literature. Up to this moment, not a syllable of this program was in writing. It was a kind of word-of-mouth deal, with variations according to each man’s or woman’s understanding....

“How could we unify this thing? Could we, out of our experience, describe certain methods that had done the trick for us? Obviously, if this movement was to propagate, it had to have literature so its message would not be garbled, either by the drunk or by the general public.”

The first step in this plan was, of course, to actually write the book. Yet, in prime alcoholic fashion, Bill got the cart before the horse and set into motion a series of intricate promotional plans to raise money to finance the vast recovery empire he envisioned. Once financing had been secured, the book would be published, and they would all sit back with the “money rolling in.”

“These reflections led us straight into a typical alcoholic fantasy!” wrote Bill in 1947. “Why not publish the book ourselves? Though told by almost everybody who knew anything of publishing that amateurs seldom produced anything but flops, we were not dismayed. This time, we said, it would be different.”

After convincing a number of the early members to buy stock certificates in the “hastily organized” Works Publishing Company—the company formed to receive the untold millions Bill and his friend Henry P., another alcoholic promoter, expected would roll in—confidence was high. “Not only were we selling common stock on a book to cure drunks—the book itself hadn’t yet been written. Amazingly

enough, we did sell that stock, \$4,500 worth, to alcoholics in New York, New Jersey, and to their friends. No one of the original 49 subscribers put up over \$300. Almost everybody paid on monthly installment, being too broke to do otherwise....”

In May 1938, when Bill finally began work on the first draft, he had been sober about three and a half years. Dr. Bob was sober a few months less than three years, and the other 100 early members who contributed in one way or another to the writing of the book had been sober for periods ranging from a couple of years to a couple of months.

They were a contentious, cantankerous bunch of newly dry drunks, clinging together desperately to preserve their hard-won sobriety, and still figuring it out by a process of trial and error. Yet, this shaky, often fearful group of men and women somehow brought to publication, in April 1939, a book that provided a blueprint for recovery from alcoholism that has been followed successfully for seventy years by millions of sober alcoholics in over 180 countries around the world.

How did they manage to set forth a clear description of their experience that would stand the test of time? Bill tells the story in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. Early on, he had written a few chapters of a possible book to use in raising money, and after *Reader’s Digest* expressed interest in an article on A.A. and its (as yet unwritten) book—interest, by the way, that would ultimately never come to fruition—Bill set out to complete the manuscript. “Each morning I traveled all the way from Brooklyn to Newark where, pacing up and down in Henry’s office, I began to dictate rough drafts of the chapters of the coming book.”

Throughout, he consulted the group conscience, reading each chapter as it was finished to the New York group at its weekly meeting and sending copies to Dr. Bob to share with the Akron group. From Akron, he reported receiving good support, but the chapters “got a real mauling” from the New York bunch. “I redictated them and Ruth [Hock, Henry P.’s nonalcoholic secretary] retyped them over and over.” In spite of all this, the first few chapters went easily, until he got to Chapter 5, when the alcoholics realized that “at this point we would have to tell how our program for recovery from alcoholism really worked. The backbone of the book would have to be fitted in right here.

“This problem had secretly worried the life out of me,” wrote Bill. “I had never written anything before and neither had any other member of the New York group.... The hassling over the four chapters already finished had really been terrific. I was exhausted. On many a day I felt like throwing the book out the window.

“I was in this anything-but-spiritual mood on the night when the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous were written. I was sore and tired clear through. I lay in bed... with pencil in hand and with a tablet of scratch paper on my knee. I could not get my mind on the job, much less put my heart into it. But here was one of those things that had to be done. Slowly my mind came into some kind of focus.”

Up to that time, the A.A. program had been strictly word of mouth, using basic ideas evolved from the Oxford Groups, William James, and Dr. Silkworth, “the little doctor who loved drunks.” It came down, essentially, to six steps: admitting powerlessness over alcohol, taking a moral inventory, sharing shortcomings with another person, making restitution, helping other alcoholics, and praying to God for power to practice these ideas.

There were considerable variations on this general procedure, however, and at that point, nothing in writing. “

As my mind ran over these developments, it seemed to me that the program was still not definite enough. It might be a long time before readers of the book in distant places and lands could be personally contacted. Therefore our literature would have to be as clear and comprehensive as possible. Our steps would have to be more explicit....

“Finally I started to write. I set out to draft more than six steps; how many more I did not know. I relaxed and asked for guidance. With a speed that was astonishing, considering my jangling emotions, I completed the first draft. It took perhaps half an hour. The words kept right on coming. When I reached a stopping point, I numbered the new steps. They added up to twelve. Somehow this number seemed significant.”

Then began the grueling process of refining and calibrating these twelve new steps to the point where they would pass muster with the rest of the alcoholics Bill had brought into the process, those in Akron and New York. On the whole, the Akronites liked the new steps and supported the remainder of the text based on them. “But in New York the hot debate about the Twelve Steps and the book’s contents was doubled and redoubled. There were conservative, liberal, and radical viewpoints.”

Bill, as the writer, was “caught squarely in the middle of all this arguing.... For a while it looked as if we would bog down into permanent disagreement....”

Yet, just before the manuscript was finished, “an event of great significance took place.... We were still arguing about the Twelve Steps. All this time I had refused to... change a word of the original draft, in which... I had consistently used the word ‘God,’ and in one place the expression ‘on our knees’ was used. Praying to God on one’s knees was still a big affront to [several of the alcoholics]... we finally began to talk about the possibility of compromise. Who first suggested the actual compromise words I do not know, but they are words well known throughout the length and breadth of A.A. today: In Step Two we decided to describe God as a ‘Power greater than ourselves.’ In Steps Three and Eleven we inserted the words ‘God as we understood Him.’ From Step Seven we deleted the expression ‘on our knees.’ And, as a lead-in sentence to all the steps we wrote these words: ‘Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery.’ A.A.’s Twelve Steps were to be suggestions only....

“God was certainly there in our Steps, but He was now expressed in terms that anybody—anybody at all—could accept and try. Countless A.A.s have since testified that without this great evidence of liberality they could never have set foot on any path of spiritual progress or even approached us in the first place. It was another one of those providential ten-strikes.”

Concluding his description of the book-writing process in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill

made it clear that all the hassles had been worth it. “It should here be emphasized that the creation of A.A.’s book brought forth much more than disputes about its contents. As the volume grew so did the conviction that we were on the right track. We saw tremendous vistas of what this book might become and might do. High expectation based on a confident faith was the steady and sustaining overtone of feeling that finally prevailed among us. Like the sound of a receding thunderstorm, the din of our earlier battles was now only a rumble. The air cleared and the sky was bright. We all felt good.”

Sometime in 2009, in its fourth edition and 70th year of continuous publication, it is expected that the 30 millionth copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous* will be sold. Available in 58 languages, including American Sign Language and Braille, multiple print and audio formats, A.A.’s basic text has carried the message of hope and recovery literally around the world. Quite a record of success for a book whose seeds were sown of failure.

The Second Step—A Measure of Hope

Copyright © The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., February 1970

If the First Step is a measure of our despair, the Second is a measure of our hope. The First Step is the admission and acceptance of our defeat—total, absolute defeat. With all our resources, we can’t stay sober; with the best intentions and with the utmost determination, we still find our lives crashing down around our heads. Indeed, we are powerless over alcohol, and our lives are unmanageable.

But if we are powerless over alcohol, then who or what will keep us sober? And if we cannot manage our own lives, then who or what will guide us, help us return to some sort of rational existence?

In answer to both questions, the Second Step says: a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

With that single, simple statement, the Second Step lays the spiritual cornerstone of AA: If we are to recover from the physical, mental, and spiritual disease called alcoholism, we must come to believe in and rely on a force outside ourselves.

This is not easy for most of us to do, and for many it takes time. Fortunately, the Step is very careful to use the wording “Came to believe.” Some of us come to believe almost instantly; others take weeks or months; still others take years. There is no set timetable, and there is no reason to feel guilt over inability to accept the Second Step immediately, with all its ramifications. On the other hand, though, if we do not work toward an acceptance of the Step, if we ignore it or kick it under the rug and hope it goes away, we cut the spiritual heart out of the program.

So, by hook or by crook, we come to believe. But believe in what? In three things: the existence of a force outside—and greater than—ourselves; the fact of our own insanity; the ability of the greater power to take care of that insanity.

For reasons which someday someone may explain far better than I can, many or even most alcoholics seem to have trouble with the word “insanity,” though the track record of any practicing alcoholic—even the part we remember—should be proof enough that we are at this stage somewhat different from the normal. To many, the word conjures up visions of men in white coats, or patients chasing butterflies across Happydale, or any one of a dozen forms of psychotic behavior. But a word is only a word, and “insanity” can refer to any kind of behavior that is at variance with what is generally accepted as normal.

Our obsessive, compulsive behavior in relation to alcohol can hardly be termed normal. Nor can the things we do while drinking. Nor can many of the habit patterns, mental processes, or just plain hangups we have after we stop drinking.

Any discussion of the Second Step will show that the word “insanity” means, to different people, that we were insane while we drank, or before we started drinking, or at all three stages. These different fervencies of opinion become unimportant in the light of this statement: If we were insane while we drank, the craving to return to that life must be equally insane, and if there was or is some problem that adds fuel to the craving, then the problem must be eliminated. But the solution offered by that statement is not as easy as it looks. To put it crudely: A truly sick mind cannot repair itself; in fact, many times it can’t even see what’s wrong.

The human mind has a marvelous ability to protect itself from outside influences. Although the conscious portion of the mind may have a sincere desire to find out what’s wrong and to fix it, the subconscious part will block any such effort by putting up a bewildering variety of misleading motivations, misinformation, and misdirections. The more important—the deeper—the particular hang-up is, the higher and thicker this wall will be. If the problem is big enough, the conscious, thinking mind will not even be aware of its existence, and the mind that does become aware will still be powerless to do much about it.

The knowledge of that helplessness in trying to cope with our own problems by ourselves is an integral part of the First and Second Steps. The Second Step states very clearly that our insanity can be taken care of, our sanity restored, by a power greater than ourselves. Once we have become aware of our own irrationality and our inability to cope with it single-handed, it then becomes a question of searching out a solution that is outside—and greater than—ourselves.

It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of this search for an acceptance of a power, a force, an influence that is outside ourselves. The Step refers to a power greater than ourselves. Obviously, if we are unable to solve our problems alone, the power must be greater than we are in order to bring about anything much worthwhile. However, babies have to creep before they can walk, and walk before they can run. It is tough merely to begin to look outside ourselves for any kind of force or power, let alone a greater power. In fact, it is hard for some of us to accept the idea that there is anything outside ourselves.

That last statement deserves some explanation. A rational, thinking, conscious mind has no trouble with the idea that each person, thing and force has a separate and distinct existence. We can say (and believe), “I am. You are. He is.”

However, the subconscious or unconscious mind often rejects this idea. It says, “I am, but you exist only as I think about you.” Extreme? Hardly. One of the most powerful tools in AA is the process by which one alcoholic identifies with another. First, this identification consists merely of recognizing that there are people who exist independently

of our own minds. Then the process goes further: It identifies another alcoholic as a similar human being. But the basic identification is with another human being as a separate entity.

Once that log jam has been broken up, the rest of the process is relatively easy. Once we become aware that there are other people and things—and forces—outside ourselves, it becomes a matter of searching until a power that does some good is found. Eventually, through any one of a wide variety of spiritual experiences, the power is recognized as the basic driving force of the universe.

Disposing of the whole concept of acquiring a greater power in one or two sentences may seem abrupt, but is anything else worth saying? Those who have had a spiritual experience already know all about it, while for those who have not yet had one, an outpouring of words would have no real meaning.

The search for a higher power and the nature of that power, when found, are very personal matters. Many of us have no trouble in accepting God as our Higher Power; many others shy away from the word “God,” but have no trouble accepting the presence of some sort of universal force; still others look upon our AA group or all of AA as a power greater than ourselves.

In all these cases, though, we have acquired a belief in some force that is external, more powerful than we are, and capable of helping us return to sanity. This implies that the external, more powerful force is a force for good, an orderly force capable of making sense out of the chaos of reality, and bringing order to our own chaotic lives.

The final stage of a full acceptance of the Second Step is to come to believe that this greater power—a good and orderly greater power—will indeed actually help us. We have already accepted the idea that this force can do the job. Now we must become convinced, completely convinced, that the power will do it.

Once again, words are hardly an adequate method of trying to express belief. Those who have thrown themselves on the mercy of the court, so to speak, know that the higher power will do exactly as the Step says. But that statement is no help at all to those who haven’t. What may help is a very brief description of one member’s struggles with the Second Step.

I came into AA as an agnostic—or, rather, I didn’t believe in anything much, but I wanted to. Although I couldn’t begin to accept the concept of God, I certainly liked the serenity and obvious peace of mind I saw in those who did believe.

As my time in the program grew, this desire grew. Also increasing day by day was my pain—pure, unrelieved pain—not physical pain, but a longing inside my brain and my heart for something above and, most important, beyond me.

My group and the whole AA program helped, and as time went by I began to perceive some sort of order where

**Events for
February 2011**

Intergroup Mtg 9:30 am Sun
Breakfast Amvets Feb 6th

HUNTSVILLE 20TH EVER ROUNDUP
Holiday Inn Select 401 WILLIAMS
HUNTSVILLE AL (258) 533-1400
February. 3-6th
www.aaareal.org/events/default.php

40th Annual Gulf Coast Roundup
February 4-6th
Ramada Plaza Beach Resort—FWB
www.gulfcoastroundup.com

District 14 GSR 6:30 pm Mon
Meeting Amvets Feb 7th

Intergroup Bus 6:30 pm Mon
Meeting Feb 21st

27TH ANNUAL JUBILEE CON-
VENTION - Serenity Happens
February 26-27th
Erie Meyer Civic Center
GULF SHORES AL
<http://gulfcoastaa.org/events.html>

**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, Inc**

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

AAGRAPEVINE.ORG



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

there had been only confusion, some sense of guidance where there had been only a labyrinth of blind alleys.

Then one day (on the Garden State Parkway, as unlikely as that sounds) all the pieces fell into place. Whatever barrier had blinded my vision, preventing me from seeing the true nature of things, was gone. For the first time in my life, I became aware of the all-pervading presence of an incomprehensibly vast power. Then, too, I became aware that I was only one infinitely small—but vitally important—part of the universe. Infinitely small because I was one tiny soul on one planet going around one sun in one galaxy of countless billions, but vitally important because the entire, immense universe would be very, very, very slightly different without me, as it would be different without any of us.

The vision, if I may call it that, was momentarily staggering, but only momentarily. The essential rightness of my vision sustained me, and still sustains me. If I am a part of the whole—even a tiny part—I belong here.

And if I belong here, all I have to do is find out exactly what I am supposed to be and do. For me as an alcoholic, part of this answer is obvious. The universe has the ability—in fact, it makes it a rule—to eliminate the bad and the sick, and since the alcoholic is indeed a sick person, the universe—or society—will eliminate him. Therefore, to drink is for me to deny my higher power.

But that is only part of the problem, although perhaps the most important part. I personally conceive of the universe as a very orderly place; to achieve a serene and happy existence, all that is required of me is to be aware of this order and fit myself into it. This is a lot easier said than done, of course. So, in AA, after the Second Step there are ten more designed to help accomplish this.

But once we have accepted, as ineluctable fact, our powerlessness over alcohol, and once we have come to believe that a greater power will give us all the help we need, we have made two giant steps along the road to recovery

P. S., Greenwich, CT

Copyright © The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., February 1970



District 14: Intergroup Treasury
December 21, 2010-January 17, 2011

Prudent Reserve as of December 31, 2010:	\$9,341.40
2010 year to date: Total Income	951.68
Expenditures	1,516.22
Net cash flow	-564.54

Current month: Beginning Balance	6,266.43
Income	951.68
Expenditures	1,516.22
Net cash flow	-564.54
Ending Balance	5,701.89

Income: Group contributions & reimbursements:

Busters for Sobriety	300.00
Mossy Head	30.00
Weekenders	52.95
Straight Up	180.00
Sparkle	150.00
IG Breakfast (net 9.00)	29.00
Alkathon:	
Book Raffle	36.55
50:50	54.00
7 th Tradition	119.18

Expenses & disbursements:

Copy Products (photocopier maintenance)	30.00
Cox Communications	141.06
Rent for Central Office BDR	435.00
Gulf Power Electric (total)	487.81
Bayside Answering Service (telephone)	84.00
Reimb for Office supplies(white paper&calendar)	43.76
USPS postage stamps-treasury use	17.60
USPS post office box rental (paid thru 12/31/11)	70.00
AmVets Breakfast Rent	20.00
Alkathon-Food : 2/25/2010 Brown Buggers	125.00
Alkathon Rent : st Pres. Church, FWB	60.00
Service charge deducted from Bank Statement	1.99

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann R., IG Treasurer

BIRTHDAYS

NICEVILLE GROUP

Lars R. 2/19/73 38Yrs.

COVER TO COVER GROUP

Sid S. 2 6Yrs.

John O. 8 Yrs.

MIRACLE GROUP

Amber D. 2/1/08 3Yrs.

Steve T. 2/12/91 20Yrs.

WEEKENDERS GROUP

Jeff T. 2/13/03 8Yrs.

Peggy H. 2/18/10 1Yr.

STRAIGHT UP GROUP

Inez S. 2/2/07 4Yrs.

Susan C. 2/16/97 14Yrs.

Dylan F. 2/8/10 1Yr.

Terry H. 2/12/09 2Yrs.

Robin C. 2/24/06 5Yrs.

Dillon 2/10/10 1Yr.

MOSSYHEAD GROUP

Jerry G. 2/6/2002 9 years

BROWN BAGGERS GROUP

Sharon H. 2/14/05 6 Yrs.

Charlie S. 2/4/08 3Yrs.

Herb W, 2/15/08 3Yrs.

Jim B. 2/2/08 3 Yrs.

Daniel S. 2/7/08 3Yrs.

Mark S. 2/21/09 2Yrs.

Lisa F. 2/1/09 2Yrs.

Lee N. 2/15/09 2 Yrs.

Matt K. 2/10/10 1Yr.

Billy M. 2/1/10 1Yr.

SECOND CHANCE GROUP

Bill G. 2/22/10 1Yr.

Adam G. 2/14/06 5Yrs.

Anthony B. 2/28/06 5Yrs.