



The Eighty - Three 'ORIGINS'

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Area 83 Archives Newsletter

AREA 83 ARCHIVES October 2019

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The A.A. Way was written by Ada K., who lived near Akron, Ohio. Not an alcoholic, she attended meetings with her husband, known as Doc, who was a chiropractor. In Akron they ran a Recovery House for alcoholics. They had a cottage at Trent River where they used to host local members at picnics. In the 1950s they supported the Belmont group in Havelock and other local groups.

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The "A. A." Way

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I found myself in a bottomless pit, Of sorrow of woe and despair.
When a ray of light revealed to me, The steps of a winding stair.

In vain, I tried to reach those steps. Of myself it could not be done.
When I cried for help, A voice replied, "You are standing on step number one".

Whose voice it was I could not tell, And I asked, "Just who are you?"
"Please don't go away, You are helping me." He said, "You are standing on step number two".

I had found a Friend, who could help me out, I knew He could set me free.
I trusted in Him, Whoever He was, And He led me to step number three.

I sat on this step and thought of myself, As I never had thought before.
Of my wasted life, and the harm I had done. He showed me to step number four.

Then I said to this Friend. "Whoever you are, I would be better dead than alive,
For I am a cheat, A liar and thief". He said, "You are standing on step number five".

"With you as a Friend, A helper and guide, I can rise from this terrible fix,
I'll do as you say, if you'll lead the way". He said, "You are now on step number six."

"I know I am not worth the help you are giving, To me its like Manna from Heaven.
I'll do my best to mend my ways". You are standing on step number seven."

"I harmed my wife, My children, My friends, But will amend before it's too late".
Then the voice by my side, so gently replied. "You are standing on step number eight."

"I will make amends wherever I can, When the power to do so is mine."
Again came the voice, more clear than before. "You are on step number nine".

"I'll admit I've been wrong, but want to go right, And stand as a man among men."
Again came the voice of the Man of my choice. "You are now on step number ten".

This Man by my side, such a wonderful Friend, He was surely sent from Heaven.
I shall always be thankful for what He has done, Then He led me to step number eleven.

When Lo and Behold, I had reached the top, The day was bright and fair,
Then I thought of those, I had left behind, In that bottomless pit of despair.

The ray of Light, which came to me, And revealed the winding stair,
Came from a torch in the hand of a Friend, I must throw my light in there.

This torch is a guide to show the way, I must see that it's always lit,
Without this light, I can easily fall, To the depth of that bottomless pit.

I must never forget this wonderful Friend, In whose joy I now can delve.
He is with me each day and I hear Him say, "You are now on step number twelve."

To steer ourselves clear of this bottomless pit, Where woe and sorrow are rife.
There is one sure way, "Take it day by day, follow the A. A. way of life."

Ada K.

This is a reproduction of an original poem signed by the author- Ada K. Cathy K. of District 86 kindly allowed the AA Archives in Peterborough to make a copy.

The Traditions as They Apply to Archives

Tradition One - Unity. The archives teams work as trusted servants for our area. The archives itself serves to document the work of AA in our area, to provide a context for understanding our growth and development, and to make the Archives repository of historical documents and memorabilia available to our members. Within the archives is our common history, our roots. By gathering and caring for our Area's local history, we document for posterity the decisions we have made, the reasons why, and both our successes and our failures. Together this rich resource is made available to be reviewed as required and provides a sense of connectivity and of unity to our members. In that light it serves to provide guidance, and to prevent divisiveness. With the spirit of rotation, this information continues to be of benefit to whomever needs it. Our displays show our history, and both educate and share our common unity. They provide a context to understand AA's progression, principles and traditions.

Tradition Two - Group Conscience. Informed and guided by the Archives Workbook and the Archives Guidelines, the archives mandate within each district is determined by Group Conscience. They determine what will be collected, stored, accessed and shared. The hope is to capture the experience of members and groups over time. In addition A.A. archives document our twelve-step work; providing a record of experience, strength and hope. With respect to the spirit of rotation, archives provide a record of initiatives, lessons learned and a path forward. What we choose to collect, how much we collect, and the number of copies can be agreed upon by group conscience. The Archives Committee bears in mind ethics and anonymity requirements, in providing access to our members, and outside research requests.

Tradition Three - Desire to Stop Drinking. Collecting our member's stories and experiences tells who we were, and who we are today. Our group histories tell of our growth, the sharing of one alcoholic with another. Our personnel stories link us together. They have been key to the program from the days of Bill W. and Dr. Bob. We follow our General Service Office requirements for collecting group histories, and for capturing oral histories. In addition, we define and implement research and access policies to provide the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic. Our displays show the newcomer that the AA program works and that they are not alone.

Tradition Four - Autonomy. Within our Area, we do our part to meet Bill W's request for establishing Archives

collections. To this end, we follow and meet the AA Archives Guidelines, and the Archives Workbook published by the General Service Office. In this way, we ensure that what we do does not negatively impact AA as a whole. For each district/group we document how they came to be, their growth, and their specific challenges and how they were resolved. This information is of importance for our archives.

Tradition Five - Carry the Message. As per our primary purpose, our archives contain our collective wisdom on sponsorship, recovery, our service to groups, districts and area committees, and the steps we took. To this end we collect and preserve the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. We create, label and organize our displays to be teachable moments, while emphasizing anonymity and bring our displays to roundups, assemblies, and to any group as requested.

Tradition Six - Our Focus is AA. Since archives is intended to be a controlled and monitored holding of AA history, we follow ethical guidelines in the collection of our materials. We ensure we have a deed of gift for all of our donations, and honour any caveats listed by the donor. We are not a business. We do not keep private collection within the archives.

Tradition Seven - Self Supporting. Archives is supported through the Area by funding Archives Workshops and support of the Area Archivist. The District perhaps in terms of assistance in start up costs, and by the various Intergroup Archives Committee's initiatives. Groups can also assist in delegating funding/donating collection management supplies for the district archives (i.e., equipment, office supplies, duplicating services, etc.). Larger areas, that may have archives resources and documents in duplicate, could offer to donate copies or share with districts lacking these resources in the spirit of traditions one, five, six and seven (a prudent reserve.) As the program says, we can't keep it unless we give it away.

Tradition Eight - Nonprofessional. We are not professionals; maintenance of our archives is strictly voluntary. However, we do have access to those who are professional. Resources for our Archives Workshop training are often professional archivists with a passion for archives who kindly volunteer to assist us. Various University and City Archives provide our Archivists with tours and information sessions on best practices. As is often the case, past Archivists and Archives Chairs are encouraged to stay involved as extra Archives hands on Intergroup Archives Committees.

Tradition Nine- Committees and Service Boards. Many districts within Area 83 have archives chairs. Some of these chairs attend Intergroup Archives Committee meetings. There, they report on new materials received and ongoing projects. At the Area level, the Area Archives Chair prepares reports on the Archives Chair and Archivists activities for the Area Committee meetings and Assemblies. Twice a year, after the Service Information Day of the Assembly weekend, there is an Archives Committee Meeting where district and area archives chairs meet to discuss progress, plans and initiatives.

Tradition Ten - No Outside Issues. The Mission of AA's General Service Office Archives is to document permanently the work of AA and to make the history of the organization available to our members. Our area is fully in line with this mission. We follow ethics and guidelines as outlined in GSO's Archives literature and workbook. The documents we collect represents a very small part of AA, yet it helps to create a priceless reflection of AA as a whole.

Tradition Eleven - Anonymity. We keep in mind anonymity and protect our members at all times; their names, their photos. We do not provide photocopies of private correspondence, we maintain the integrity of archival documents and respect copyright laws. We protect the posthumous anonymity of our deceased members.

Tradition Twelve - Spiritual Foundation. We too are AA. And as such we focus on Recovery, Unity, Service - our Three Legacies. Our primary purpose is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is our challenge, and we are grateful.

Archives Initiatives

Have you ever seen an A.A. Repository?

You may be asking what is a repository?

This is where Archivists and Archive Chairs collect historical AA records, then identify and catalogue such items. They are then organized, preserved and stored in a climate controlled environment.

Many districts have a repository where historical AA records are kept; Group Histories, Oral Histories, Meeting books, Grapevines, etc.

In most cases, by appointment, any AA member can visit the following archives:

- **General Service Office Archives (New York)**
- **Greater Toronto Intergroup Office**
- **Ottawa Intergroup Office**
- **District 42 – Remington Museum in Ogdensburg, N.Y.**
- **District 86 – Peterborough**

To inquire if your district has a repository, or to schedule a visit to view the A.A. records, contact your district archives chair.

Records for Area 83 are stored at the GTA Archives repository. These items are available for viewing upon request contingent upon a commitment to preserve the anonymity of our members.



80 Years of AA in Ontario

The GTA (Greater Toronto Area) Archives Committee is putting together a history of 80 years of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ontario.

We are hoping that it will be the definitive history to date, will provide valuable information to A.A. members and be a reference for future A.A. historians.

In order to be successful, we need the support and participation of Area and District archivists, and the membership across the province. If you would like to contribute, please tell us in writing how A.A. came to the first home or meeting place in your town or city.

You can email your submission to archives@area83aa.org

Alcoholics Anonymous Program Given High Praise in Speeches At Third Annual AA Banquet

By LEONARD

How such a simple program of Alcoholics Anonymous can solve such a complex problem as alcoholism, when so many other methods and treatments fail, is always a mystery.

Speakers at the third annual banquet of the Massena-Potsdam Chapter, Alcoholics Anonymous, at the Arlington Inn, Potsdam, Saturday night emphasized the fact that the AA program often worked after everything else had failed.

And they testified that they had indeed been surprised.

Guests at the annual banquet were present from Cornwall, Plattsburgh, Syracuse, Ottawa, Avonmore, Ont., Alexandria, Ont., Williamstown, Mass., and members of the local chapter which includes the Massena-Potsdam area.

The principles of Alcoholics Anonymous is a way of life, the toastmaster declared. But through those principles, miracles have been worked. Lives have been saved and regenerated.

"No one ever had anything beneficial happen to him because of alcohol", said the toastmaster. "But lots of bad things have happened due to alcohol.

He recalled that for 25 years he had been an alcoholic, or up until 1950 when he had joined Alcoholics Anonymous. He said he never knew in the morning what had happened to him or to others the night before, whom he had insulted while he was under the influence of alcohol, what checks he had written, what money he had spent.

He described alcoholism as a hellish nightmare.

"The greatest happiness we now have is to know that our families are happy. Our wives, or husbands, and children can breathe easier for they know that we are sober."

The toastmaster listed the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Two speakers for the evening were from the Williamstown, Mass., chapter. They were a man and a woman.

The man said that he was making his first public speech. Despite that being his first speech, he kept the attention of the audience at all times.

He said when he looked into the dining hall in the afternoon and saw the tables set up and all the empty chairs, and knew that he would be one of the speakers, he said to himself:

"How I could use a drink now!"

He said he went to his hotel room. In other years, he would no more than get into his room until he would yell for room service and get a drink.

But it is different now, he declared.

He said he began to drink as a young man, just a little before prohibition. During the 1930s, he knew what was meant by the shakes. He was working in New Jersey and then went to New Hampshire as he thought that if he got away from his old crowd, he could cut down on his drinking. But he looked up a bootlegger as soon as he got to his new location and he was able to drink as much as before.

He and his brother went into business. They both drank. They would go on binges together. After a several days' drunk, he woke up in the morning and found his brother dead in the same room.

The autopsy report took three pages. One reference was made to tuberculosis, but the conclusion was "acute alcoholism" as the cause of death.

"I thought the doctors were wrong. We had drunk together, drink for drink, and I should be dead too, but I wasn't. Therefore, I was certain my brother died of tuberculosis or something else."

He told how he became a daily drinker during the 1940s. He was in charge of a sales department and he had the job of arranging entertainment. This meant he could always have a good supply of liquor.

He got into trouble with his boss and was demoted. He then went into a new location. He went into business for himself. His debts piled up as he used his income for whiskey instead of paying other bills.

His drinking increased. He could not get out of bed in the morning without a drink.

His binges became worse. He would have to call a doctor for help.

At the end of one binge, he knew that no doctor could possibly help him. He felt it was the end.

It was then that a member of Alcoholics Anonymous came to his aid. He said that he was hindered for some time with the thought that he was better than the others in the group, maybe he was not an alcoholic. After he came to realize that all were equal, he began to make progress.

The woman's story was also very fascinating. She said she remembered no birthdays from the time she was 21 until she was 32. She was drunk on all of them.

Her experiences included treatments in mental hospitals, even electric shock treatment. She had a promising career as a hospital dietitian and later she took one job after another in order to get enough money to buy alcohol.

Finally after she had been discharged as a dishwasher in a certain ten-cent store, she went to another town. She had a little money and had the taxi driver take her to a rooming house. Within a few minutes after she took the room, she went out to search for a liquor store. It was some distance away. She got the bottle and although she walked for blocks and blocks, she never could find that house where she had engaged a room.

"There's a house in that city today that has my two suitcases. I never did find that house. I kept the key for a couple of years."

Without a suitcase and no place else to go, she went to the railroad station as the only shelter she could find. It was easy to go into the ladies' lounge now and then and take a nip from the bottle.

She passed out and fell on the floor. She was taken to the hospital in the ambulance.

Throughout her drinking experiences, she had been able to hide the fact that she was drinking. She was able to get pills that would clear her breath. When the doctor examined her, he knew that she was recovering from an operation and he thought that her fainting had been due to that. The doctors in the first mental hospital had questioned her about drinking and they had believed her. Thus one hospital would refer to the case record in the other mental hospital, and in this way she was able to hide her drinking for a long time.

She gave high praise to Alcoholics Anonymous, and said that when she attended the first meeting, she knew that she was with people who had been through some of the same

FROM
THE
VAULTS

experiences she had.

The 12 steps recited by the toastmaster are as follows:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

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

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and practice these principles in all our affairs.

This article was published when AA was very young in the Massena-Potsdam region of upper state New York; three groups were holding regular meetings in this area. Potsdam group, which was registered with GSO in 1958, actually started meeting around 1950 or 51. Star Lake group was probably much the same, as many groups did not register with GSO until some time, even years after the meeting actually started. The Massena Thursday Night Group started on 9 September 1953, which appears to have coincided with the start of the banquet referenced in the article above.