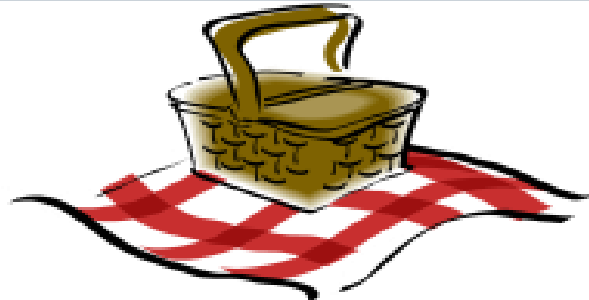




NATURE COAST JOURNAL



MAY 2021



Nature Coast Intergroup Presents:

SPRING FLING

**Saturday, May 8th, 2021
2-6pm**

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Steps | Traditions | Concepts

STEP 5

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

TRADITION 5

“Each group has but one primary purpose— to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

CONCEPT 5

“Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration. ”

“What it was like, What happened, and What it is like now”

Your story could appear in an upcoming issue.

**Send your stories, poems, articles, and anniversary lists to
News@Ncintergroup.com**

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Safe Use of Money

by Bill W.

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In Alcoholics Anonymous, does money make the mare go or is it the root of all evil? We are in the process of solving that riddle. Nobody pretends to have the complete answer. Where the proper use of money ends-and its misuse begins – is the point in spiritual space” we are all seeking. Few group problems are giving thoughtful A.A.’s more concern than this. Everyone is asking, “What shall be our attitude toward voluntary contributions, paid workers, professionalism, and outside donations?”

In the first years of A.A. we had no money problems. We met in homes where our womenfolk made sandwiches and coffee. If an individual A.A. wished to grubstake a fellow alcoholic, he did so. It was purely his own affair. We had no group funds, hence no group money troubles. And it must be recorded that many an old-time A.A. wishes we could now return to those early days of halcyon simplicity. Knowing that quarrels over material things have crushed the spirit of many a good undertaking, it is often thought that too much money may prove an evil for us too.

It’s small use yearning for the impossible. Money has entered our picture and we are definitely committed to its sparing use. No one would seriously think of abolishing our meeting places and clubs for the sake of avoiding money altogether. Experience has shown that we very much need these facilities, so we must accept whatever risk there is in them.

But how shall we keep these risks to a minimum; how shall we traditionally limit the use of money so that it may never topple the spiritual foundation upon which each A.A. life so completely depends? That is our real problem today. So let us look together at the main phases of our financial situation, seeking to discover what is essential, what is nonessential, what is legitimate and harmless, and what may be dangerous or unnecessary.

Suppose we begin with voluntary contributions. Each A.A. finds himself dropping money in “the hat” to pay the rent of a meeting place, a club, or the maintenance of his local or national headquarters. Though not all of us believe in clubs, and while a few A.A.’s see no necessity for any local or national offices, it can be said fairly that the vast majority of us believe that these services are basically necessary. Provided such facilities are efficiently handled, and their funds properly accounted for, we are only too glad to pledge them our regular support, with the full understanding, of course, that such contributions are in no wise a condition of our A.A. membership. These particular uses of our money are now generally accepted and, with some qualifications, there is little worry of dire long-range consequences.

Yet some concern does remain, arising mostly in connection with our clubs, local offices and the General Office. Because these places customarily employ paid workers, and because their operation implies a certain amount of business management, it is sometimes felt that we may get bogged down with a heavy officialdom or, still worse, a downright professionalization of A.A. Though it must be said that these doubts are not always unreasonable, we have already had enough experience to relieve them in large part.

To begin with it seems most certain that we need never be overwhelmed by our clubs, local offices or by the General Office at New York City. These are places of service; they cannot really control or govern A.A. If any of them were to become inefficient or overbearing the remedy is simple enough. The average A.A. would stop his financial support until conditions were changed. As our A.A. membership does not depend on fees or dues, we can always “take our special facilities or leave them alone.” These services must always serve us well or go out of business. Because no one is compelled to support them, they can never dictate, nor can they stray from the main body of A.A. tradition for very long.

In direct line with the principle of “taking our facilities or leaving them alone” there is an encouraging tendency to incorporate all such special functions separately if they involve any great amount of money, property or management. More and more, the A.A. groups are realizing ...(continued on page 4)...

...(continued from page 3)... that they are spiritual entities, not business organizations. Of course the smaller club rooms or meeting places often remain unincorporated because their business aspect is only nominal. But as large growth takes place it is usually found wise to incorporate and so set the club apart from surrounding groups. Support of the club then becomes an individual matter rather than a group matter. If, however, the club also provides a central office secretary serving the surrounding area, it seems only fair that group treasuries in that area should shoulder this particular expense because such a secretary serves all groups, even though the club itself may not. Our evolution in large A.A. centers is beginning to indicate most clearly that while it is a proper function of a cluster of groups, or their central committee, to support a paid secretary for their area, it is not a group or central committee function to support clubs financially. Not all A.A.'s care for clubs. Therefore club support has to come mainly from those individual A.A.'s who need or like clubs, which, by the way, is the majority. But the majority ought not to try to coerce the minority into supporting clubs they do not want or need.

Of course clubs also get a certain amount of help from meetings held in them. Where central meetings for an area take place in a club it is customary to divide the collections between the club and the central committee for the area, heavily favoring the club of course, because the club is providing the meeting place. The same arrangement may be entered into between the club and any particular group which wishes to use the club whether for meeting or entertainment. Generally speaking, the board of directors of a club looks after the financial management and the social life of the place. But strictly A.A. matters remain the function of the surrounding groups themselves. This division of activity is by no means the rule everywhere: it is offered as a suggestion only, much in keeping, however, with the present trend.

A large club or central office usually means one or more paid workers. What about them-are they professionalizing A.A.? About this, there is a hot debate every time a club or central committee gets large enough to require paid help. On this subject we have all done a pile of fuzzy thinking. And I would be one of the first to plead guilty to that charge.

The reason for our fuzzy thinking is the usual one-it is fear. To each one of us, the ideal of A.A.. however short we may be of it personally, is a thing of beauty and perfection. It is a power greater than ourselves which has lifted us out of the quicksand and set us safe on shore. The slightest thought of marring our ideal, much less bartering it for gold, is to most of us unthinkable. So we are constantly on the alert against the rise, within A.A., of a paid class of practitioners or missionaries. In A.A., where each of us is a goodwill practitioner and missionary in his own right, there is no need for anyone to be paid for simple Twelfth Step work-a purely spiritual undertaking. While I suppose fear of any kind ought to be deplored, I must confess that I am rather glad that we exercise such great vigilance in this critical matter.

Yet there is a principle upon which I believe we can honestly solve our dilemma. It is this: a janitor can sweep the floor, a cook can boil the beef, a steward can eject a troublesome drunk, a secretary can manage an office, an editor can get out a news-paper-all, I am sure, without professionalizing A.A. If we didn't do these jobs ourselves we would have to hire non-alcoholics to do them for us. We would not ask any nonalcoholic to do these things full-time without pay. So why should some of us, who are earning good livings ourselves in the outside world, expect other A.A. 's to be full-time caretakers, cooks or secretaries? Why should these A.A.'s work for nothing at jobs which the rest of us could not or would not attempt ourselves? Or why, for that matter, should they be any the less well paid than for similar labor elsewhere? And what difference should it make if, in the course of their duties, they do some Twelfth Step work besides? Clearly the principle seems to be that we may pay well for special service but never for straight Twelfth Step work.

How then, could A.A. be professionalized? Quite simply. I might, for example, hire an office and hang on the door a sign reading: "Bill W.-Alcoholics Anonymous Therapist. Charges \$10.00 per hour," That would be face-to-face treatment of alcoholism for a fee. And I would surely be trading on the name of Alcoholics Anonymous, a purely amateur organization, to enlarge my professional practice. That would be professionalizing A.A.-and how! It would be quite legal, but hardly ethical.
(continued on page 5)...

Now does this mean we should criticize therapists as a class – even A.A.’s who might choose to go into that field? Not at all. The point is that no one ought to advertise himself as an A.A. therapist. As we are strictly amateur there can be no such thing. That would be a distortion of the facts which none of us could afford to try. As the tennis player has to drop his amateur status when he turns professional so should A.A.’s who become therapists cease publishing their A.A. connection. While I doubt if many A.A.’s ever go into the field of alcohol therapy, none ought to feel excluded, especially if they are trained social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists. But they certainly ought never to use their A.A. connection publicly or in such a way as to make people feel that A.A. has such a special class within its own ranks. That is where we all must draw the line.

To sum up – we have observed:

- (a) That the use of money in A.A. is a matter of the gravest importance. Where its use ends and its mis-use begins is the point we should vigilantly watch.
- (b) That A.A. is already committed to a qualified use of money, because we would not think of abolishing our offices, meeting places and clubs simply for the sake of avoiding finances altogether.
- (c) That our real problem today consists in setting intelligent and traditional limits upon our use of money, thus keeping its disruptive tendency at the minimum.
- (d) That the voluntary contributions or pledges of A.A. members should be our principal and eventually our sole support; that this kind of self-support would always prevent our clubs and offices from getting out of hand, because their funds could readily be cut off whenever they failed to serve us well.
- (e) That we have found it generally wise to separately incorporate those special facilities which require much money or management; that an A.A. group is a spiritual entity, not a business concern.
- (f) That we must, at all costs, avoid the professionalization of A.A.; that simple Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for; that A.A.’s going into alcohol therapy should never trade on their A.A. connection; that there is not, and can never be, any such thing as an “A.A. therapist.”
- (g) That A.A. members may, however, be employed by ‘is as full-time workers, provided they have legitimate duties over and beyond normal Twelfth Step work. We may, for example, surely engage secretaries, stewards and cooks without making them professional A.A.’s.

Continuing now the discussion of professionalism: A.A.’s frequently consult local committees or The Alcoholic Foundation saying they have been offered positions in related fields. Hospitals want A.A. nurses and doctors, clinics ask for A.A.’s who are social workers, universities ask for A.A.’s to work in the field of alcohol education on a non-controversial basis and industry wants us to recommend A.A.’s as personnel officers. Can we, acting as individuals, accept such offers? Most of us see no reason why we cannot.

It comes down to this. Have we A.A.’s the right to deny society the benefit of our special knowledge of the alcohol problem? Are we to tell society, even though we might make superior nurses, doctors, social workers or educators in the field of alcohol that we cannot undertake such missions for fear of professionalizing A.A.? That would certainly be farfetched, even ridiculous. Surely no A.A. should be barred from such employment because of his membership with us. He needs only to avoid “A.A. therapy” and any action or word which might hurt A.A. as a whole. Aside from this he ought to be just as employable as the nonalcoholic who would otherwise get the job and perhaps not do it half as well. In fact, I believe we still have a few A.A. bartenders. Though bartending, for obvious reasons, is not a specially recommended occupation, I have never heard anyone point out that these few members are professionalizing A.A. on account of their very special knowledge of barrooms!

Years ago we used to think A.A. should have its own hospitals, rest homes and farms. Nowadays we are equally convinced we should have nothing of the sort. Even our clubs, well inside A.A., are somewhat set apart. And in ‘the judgment of practically all, places of hospitalization or rest should be well outside A.A.-and medically supervised. Hospitalization is most definitely the job of the doctor, backed, of course, by private or community aid. It is not a function of A.A. in the sense of management or ownership. Everywhere we cooperate with hospitals. Many afford us special privileges and working arrangements. Some consult us. Others employ A.A. nurses or attendants. Relationships such as these almost always work well. But none of these institutions are known as “A.A. hospitals.” (continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

Now what about donations or payments to A.A. from outside sources? There was a time some years ago when we desperately needed a little outside aid. This we received. And we shall never cease being grateful to these devoted friends whose contributions made possible The Alcoholic Foundation, the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" and our General Office. Heaven has surely reserved a special place for every one of them. They met a great need, for in those days we A.A.'s were very few and very insolvent!

But times have changed. Alcoholics Anonymous now has thousands of members whose combined earnings each year amount to untold millions of dollars. Hence a very powerful feeling is spreading among us that A.A. ought to be self-supporting. Since most members feel they owe their very lives to the movement, they think we A.A.'s ought to pay its very modest expenses. And isn't it high time, they ask, that we commence to revise the prevalent idea that an alcoholic is always a person who must be helped-usually with money? let us A.A.'s, they say, be no longer takers from society. Instead let us be givers. We are not helpless now. Neither are we penniless any more. Were it possible to publish tomorrow that every A.A. group has become fully self-supporting, it is probable that nothing could create more goodwill for us than such a declaration. Let our generous public devote its funds to alcohol research, hospitalization or education. These fields really need money. But we do not. We are no longer poor. We can, and we should, pay our own way.

Of course, it can hardly be counted an exception to the principle of self-support if a non-alcoholic friend comes to a meeting and drops a dollar in the hat.

But it is not these small tokens of regard which concern us. It is the large contributions, especially those that may carry future obligations, which should give us pause. Then too, there is evidence that wealthy people are setting aside sums for A.A. in their wills under the impression we could use a great deal of money if we had it. Shouldn't we discourage them? And already there have been a few alarming attempts at the public solicitation of money in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous. Few, A.A.'s will fail to imagine where such a course would lead us. Every now and then we are offered money from so-called "wet" or "dry" sources. Obviously dangerous, this. For we must stay out of that ill-starred controversy. Now and then the parents of an alcoholic, out of sheer gratitude, wish to donate heavily. Is this wise? Would it be good for the alcoholic himself? Perhaps a wealthy A.A. wishes to make a large gift. Would it be good for him, or for us, if he did so?

In no case have we ever been able to question the true generosity of these givers. But is it wise to take their gifts? Although there may be rare exceptions, I share the opinion of most older A.A.'s that acceptance of large donations from any source whatever is very questionable and almost always a hazardous policy. True, the struggling club may badly need a friendly gift or loan. Even so, it might be better in the long run to pay as we go. We must never let any immediate advantage, however attractive, blind us to the possibility that we may be creating a disastrous precedent for the future. Strife over money and property has too often wrecked better societies than we temperamental alcoholics!

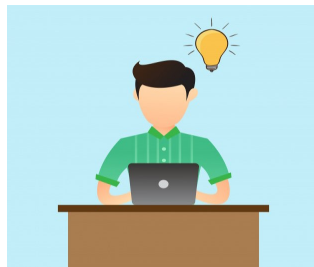
It is with the deepest gratitude and satisfaction that I can now tell you of a recent resolution passed by our over-all service committee, the trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation, who are the custodians of our national A.A. funds. As a matter of policy, they have just gone on record that they will decline all gifts carrying the slightest obligation, expressed or implied. And further, that The Alcoholic Foundation will accept no earnings which may be tendered from any commercial source. As most readers know, we have been approached of late by several motion picture concerns about the possibility of an A.A. film. Naturally money has been discussed. But our trustees, very rightly I think, take the position that A.A. has nothing to sell; that we all wish to avoid even the suggestion of commerce, and that in any case A.A., generally speaking, is now self-supporting.

To my mind, this is a decision of enormous importance to our future-a very long step in the right direction. When such an attitude about money becomes universal through A.A., we shall have finally steered clear of that golden, alluring, but very treacherous reef called Materialism. (continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)...

In the years that lie just ahead Alcoholics Anonymous faces a supreme test-the great ordeal of its own prosperity and success. I think it will prove the greatest trial of all. Can we but weather that, the waves of time and circumstances may beat upon us in vain. Our destiny will be secure!

-Submitted by Dean B.



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MAY 2021



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