



Illinois Area 21

District 12

# Alcoholics Anonymous

## NEWSLETTER

April, 2012

[www.aa-eci.org](http://www.aa-eci.org)

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Visit <http://www.aa-eci.org/newsletter.php>.*

The answer for AA Trivia from March is Bill Dotson - AA Member #3

submitted by Tony C.:

**"The Man On The Bed"** (Note: a similar article is featured in this quarter's Box 4-5-9)

On a Friday night, September 17, 1954, Bill Dotson died in Akron, Ohio.

"That is, people say he died, but he really didn't," wrote Bill Wilson. "His spirit and works are today alive in the hearts of uncounted AA's, and who can doubt that Bill already dwells in one of those many mansions in the great beyond."

Bill Dotson, the "Man on the Bed," was AA number 3. At his death, he had not had a drink in more than nineteen years. His date of sobriety was the date he entered Akron's City Hospital for his last detox, June 26, 1935. Two days later occurred that fateful day when two sober alcoholics visited him: Dr. Bob Smith of Akron, Ohio, and Bill Wilson, a guest of Dr. Bob's from New York.

A few days before, Dr. Bob had said to Bill: "If you and I are going to stay sober, we had better get busy." Dr. Bob called Akron's City Hospital and told the nurse, a "Mrs. Hall," that he and a man from New York had a cure for alcoholism. Did she have an alcoholic customer on whom they could try it out? She replied, "Well, Doctor, I suppose you've already tried it yourself?"

Then she told him of a man who had just come in with DT's, had blacked the eyes of two nurses, and was now strapped down tight. "He's a grand chap when he's sober," she added.

Dr. Bob prescribed some medications, and then asked her to transfer him to a private room. He also put him on a diet of sauerkraut and tomatoes. That's all he was allowed to eat during his hospitalization.

The nurse told Dr. Bob and Bill that Bill Dotson had been a well-known attorney in Akron and a city councilman. But he had been hospitalized eight times in the last six months. (Bill Wilson sometimes said "six times.") Following each release, he got drunk even before he got home.

Bill's wife, Henrietta Dotson, had talked to Dr. Bob and Bill earlier. When she told her husband she had been "talking to a couple of fellows about drinking" he was furious at her "disloyalty." When she told them that they were "a couple of drunks" Bill didn't mind so much. Henrietta apparently had quite a conversation with the two men, and she told her husband that their plan for staying sober themselves was to tell their plan to another drunk.

Years later, Bill Dotson reflected on the jumbled thoughts in his mind as his wife left and he began to lapse back into withdrawal stupor: "All the other people that talked to me wanted to help ME, and my pride prevented me from listening to them, and caused only resentment on my part, but I felt as if I would be a real

stinker if I did not listen to a couple of fellows for a short time, if that would cure THEM."

So Dr. Bob and Bill talked to what may have been their first "man on the bed." They told him of the serious nature of his disease, but also offered hope for a recovery. "We told him what we had done," wrote Bill, "how we got honest with ourselves as never before, how we had talked our problems out with each other in confidence, how we tried to make amends for harm done others, how we had then been miraculously released from the desire to drink as soon as we had humbly asked God, as we understood him, for guidance and protection."

But Bill Dotson was not impressed. He said, "Well, this is wonderful for you fellows, but can't be for me. My case is so terrible that I'm

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scared to go out of this hospital at all. You don't have to sell me religion, either. I was at one time a deacon in the church and I still believe in God. But I guess he doesn't believe much in me."

(Like so many of us on first coming to AA, Bill Dotson thought he was "different.") But he did agree to see Dr. Bob and Bill again. They came again the next day, and for several days thereafter. When they arrived on July 4, they found Bill's wife, Henrietta, with him. Eagerly pointing at them, he said to his wife: "These are the fellows I told you about, they are the ones who understand." Before they could say anything, he told them about his night, how he hadn't slept but had been thinking about them all night long. And he had decided that if they could do it, maybe he could do it, maybe they could do together what they couldn't do separately.

It was apparently on that day that he admitted he couldn't control his drinking and had to leave it up to God. Then they made him get down on his knees at the side of the bed and pray and say that he would turn his life over to God. Before the visit was over, he suddenly turned to his wife and said, "Go fetch my clothes, dear. We're going to get up and get out of here."

He walked out of that hospital on July 4, 1935, a free man, never to drink again. AA's Number One Group dates from that day.

That Fourth of July they had plenty to celebrate. So they had a picnic. The Smiths, Bill Wilson, the Dotsons, and Eddie Riley, the first alcoholic they tried to help were there. (Eddie didn't get sober at first, but later he did, and Eddie said in a talk that there were two firsts in A.A. -- the first one who accepted the program and the first who refused it.)

Within a week, Bill Dotson was back in court, sober, and arguing a case. But at first his wife was doubtful. He had previously gone on the wagon and stayed sober for long periods. But then he drank again. Would this time be different? And he hadn't had that sudden transforming experience that Bill Wilson talked about.

When Lois Wilson visited Akron in July of 1935, Henrietta shared these fears with her, and asked Lois whether she ever worried about her Bill drinking again. Lois answered without hesitation, "No. Never."

The message had been successfully shared a second time. Dr. Bob was no fluke. And apparently you did not have to be indoctrinated by the Oxford Group before the message could take hold. The three worked with scores of others. "Many were called but mighty few chosen; failure was our daily companion. But when I left Akron in September 1935, two or three more sufferers had apparently linked themselves to us for good," wrote Bill.

Dotson's story was not included in the first edition of the Big Book. Ernest Kurtz seems to think it was because Bill Dotson's "credentials," were apparently too blatant: highly respectable upper middle-class background, above average education, intensive youthful religious training which had since been rejected, and former social prominence recently nullified by such behavior as his assault on two nurses.

In a 1952 discussion with Bill D., he was asked why his story hadn't appeared in the first edition of the Big Book. He said that he hadn't been much interested in the project or perhaps had even thought it unnecessary. He also said that Bill Wilson had come out to Akron to record his story, which would be in the next edition of the book. It appears in the Big Book as "AA Number Three."

Old timers in Akron, according to Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, "recalled that Bill Dotson, was indeed a grand chap when sober. They remembered him as one of the most engaging people they ever knew."

One said: "I thought I was a real big shot because I took Bill D. to meetings," Another noted that, though Bill Dotson was influential in the area he was not an ambitious man in AA. "He wasn't aggressive, just a good A.A. If you went to him for help he would give you help. He would counsel with you. He never drove a car, but he went to meetings every night. He'd stand around with his thumbs in his vest like a Kentucky colonel. And he spoke so slowly, you wanted to reach out and pull the words from his mouth. I loved to be around him. He put you in mind of a real 'Easy Does It' guy -- Mr. Serenity."

His wife, looking back in 1977, described him as "a great alcoholic who, like other alcoholics, didn't want to get drunk." She reportedly remembered telling her pastor, "You aren't reaching him. I'm going to find someone who can, if I have to see everyone in Akron," and she prayed with the pastor of another church that someone her husband could understand would visit him in City Hospital, where he had been admitted with "some kind of virus."

I have found no reference to his age when Bill and Bob found him, but Bill keeps referring to him in the literature as "old Bill D." [Bill Dotson was 43 when Bill and Dr. Bob found him, just 3 years older than Bill and 13 years younger than Dr. Bob.]

In a memorial to Bill Dotson, Bill Wilson wrote: "The force of the great example that Bill set in our pioneering time will last as long as AA itself. Bill kept the faith -- what more could we say?"

Sources: "Alcoholics Anonymous", "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers", "The Language of the Heart", Bill W.'s Grapevine Writings, "Bill W." by Robert Thomsen, "Not God" by Ernest Kurtz, "Bill W." by Francis Hartigan, "My Search for Bill W." by Mel B., Bill D's Obituary. Article written by a Nancy O.

## DISTRICT 12 MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Our DCM, John C. has lists of all contributions made by groups to Area 21.

May 12<sup>th</sup> is the cut over for groups to be recognized at G.S.O., including any GSR and Alternate GSR changes. Get a group change form and mail it in or e-mail [registrarsia21@gmail.com](mailto:registrarsia21@gmail.com).

There are still service opportunities with Public Information, Website, Archives, Newsletter, Corrections, and Treatment Facilities. You don't have to be a chair person to participate in some service work on a committee to further grow in your recovery.

June 17, 2012, District 12 will be hosting the Area 21 Assembly!!! Fariba M., our Area Delegate will be speaking about her trip to the General Service Conference that she will be taking in May. There will be break-out sessions for officers and chair persons starting after District reports within the Area. All officers, chair persons and GSRs should attend. This is an excellent opportunity for all AA members of District 12. Look for more information on this event in the next Newsletter.

All Charleston meetings, except Friday night, will be moving to the Old Elks Club soon.

Savoy Tuesday Night Group is changing it's start time from 8:00pm to 7:30pm beginning on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

NEW Monticello Monday Night meeting! Mondays at 7pm, closed mtg. At Four Square Church at I-72 and Bridge Street exit. Note: Al-Anon meeting takes place next door at same time/location.

ISCYPAA Elections will be 4/22 at 2pm at 718 Randolph (Hall)

**EXTRA APRIL EVENT** (not enough room on back)

**2012 GSR (General Service Representative) School** sponsored by Southern Illinois Area 21. Saturday, April 14 10am – 2pm. Location is Ansar Temple, 630 South Sixth St., Springfield, IL. Registration for GSR School is free. Please call ahead to register with Becky B. at 309-319-0839 . Contact Mike F. at 314-640-0513 for more information.

## AA TRIVIA

*From March:*

Who is "Alcoholics Anonymous Number Three"?

*Answer:* Bill D. who started the first AA meeting in Akron, OH (Big Book, 4th ed., pages xvii and 189)

*April's Challenge:*

The pamphlet "Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W." was previously a paper published in a scholarly journal. What was the Journal?

## ANNIVERSARIES

To submit an anniversary to the newsletter, please email [newsletter@aa-eci.org](mailto:newsletter@aa-eci.org). (Be sure to get consent!)

Shannon M.	March 1	17 years
David B.	March 3	3 years
Rich B.	March 4	9 years
Terri D.	March 13	2 years
Peggy B.	March 15	24 years
Rachel D.	March 16	4 years
Dale T.	March 17	15 years
Bill B.	March 19	3 years
Kate M.	March 20	4 years
Lynn F.	March 23	3 years
Dale C.	March 24	24 years
Mike F.	March 29	3 years

*Missed anniversary from March edition:*

Amy P.	February 2	8 years
Scott K.	February 8	2 years
Stan H.	February 24	25 years

## SPEAKER MEETINGS

*Monday, April 9th, 8pm*

Cellar Dwellers, Speaker: TBA  
602 W. Green Street, Urbana

*Saturday, April 14th, 8pm*

As Bill Sees It, Speaker: Nikki H.  
718 S. Randolph Street (hall), Champaign

*Wednesday, April 18th, 7:30pm*

Nuts and Bolts, Speaker: TBA  
Camel Club, 508 E. Fairchild, Danville

*Saturday, April 21st, 6:30pm*

Bottoms Up, Speaker: Rich B.  
Serenity Shack, 117 N. Ohio Street, Rantoul

*Monday, April 23rd, 8pm*

Monday Meeting, Speaker: TBA  
109 E. Van Allen, Tuscola

*Thursday, April 26th, 7pm*

H.O.W. Group, Speaker: Ed L.  
718 S. Randolph Street (hall), Champaign

*Friday, April 27th, 8pm*

Friday Night Meeting, Speaker: TBA  
Madison & 7th Avenues, Charleston

*Saturday, April 28th, 6pm*

Working with Others, Speaker: TBA  
718 S. Randolph Street (hall), Champaign

*Sunday, April 29th, 8pm*

Grapevine Group, Speaker: TBA  
Prairie Center, 122 West Hill Street, Champaign

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Mini-Conference

*"Keep It Simple"*

Saturday, April 28, 2012 1-8 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

311 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Charleston, IL

**1:00 – Fellowship**

**1:30 – A.A. Speaker Doris B. from Champaign**

**3:00 – Al-Anon Speaker Scott W. from Charleston**

**4:30 A.A. Speaker Brian H. from Chicago**

**5:30 Dinner**

**6:45 A.A. Speaker Paula P from Champaign**

Registration: \$10 per person (dinner included, must purchase by April 21)

\$5 per person (speakers only, no dinner, or may purchase at the door)

To register: send name, address, city, state, zip and affiliation (AA / Al-Anon) and check for registration fees to Conference, 2432 Eastgate Drive, Charleston, IL 61920.

Make check payable to George Moody. For more information call 217-549-2040.

### **WHY AREN'T YOU WRITING?**



*Everyone knows that AA harbors some of the most intelligent and talented people on earth! We know that writers abound in the rooms. So why not show off your stuff? The Newsletter Committee is always looking for fresh ideas, stories, and articles to print. If you've always dreamed of being published, why not begin with your District Newsletter? To submit a piece for review, send an email to [newsletter@aa-eci.org](mailto:newsletter@aa-eci.org).*

### **BNAA 47<sup>th</sup> Roundup**

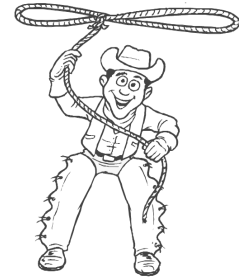
**One Day at a Time for 16802 Days  
Friday April 20 – Sunday April 22 2012**

Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Bloomington – Airport,  
3202 E. Empire St.,  
Bloomington, IL 61704  
309-662-4700 (ask for special \$99 BNAA Roundup rate)

AA Speakers: Friday, 7pm, Arlene W.  
Saturday, 10am, LeeLee and 8pm, Butch M.  
Sunday, 10am, George H.

Al-Anon Speaker: Sat., 1:30pm, Dawn C.

Registration: \$20 conference, \$45 conference/Banquet check or Money Order to: BNAA Roundup,  
P.O. Box 1384, Bloomington, IL 61702-1384  
309-828-7092  
[www.aadistrict10.org](http://www.aadistrict10.org)



**Another  
Roundup!!**

### **Announcing Saturday Night AA Fun**

Sponsored by Sunday Manhattan Group

WHAT: Board and Card Games

WHEN: First & Third Saturdays of each month Starting at 6pm, lasting as late as we stay

WHAT ELSE: Movies

WHEN: Second, Fourth & Fifth Saturday

WHERE: Terry M's House in Urbana at 2108 E. Pennsylvania Ave. (East of Philo Road between Florida & Washington, off Kinch)

QUESTIONS: Call Terry at 384-1852 or email her at [tsmoreau@comcast.net](mailto:tsmoreau@comcast.net)

HOW: Show up or Get on call/email list to be notified of what's showing (Contact Terry)