

East Central  
Illinois District  
12 AA  
Newsletter  
February 2008



Tradition Two

**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.**

1. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?
4. Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it
5. ?Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?
6. In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?

**THE TWELVE STEPS REVISITED/STEP 2  
CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER  
GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD  
RESTORE US TO SANITY.**

ONCE during a period of week end piloting, through a mishap of navigation, I flew a light plane into the clouds over some hilly terrain and got lost. The plane was without blind-flight instruments and I was without training in blind flying, and therefore in moment-to-moment peril of a fatal tailspin. I tried to climb out of the cloudbank but couldn't make it; it was too high. To try to get under it might wind me up in a pile of burning junk on a hillside, or in a power line. Whether I went up, or down, or stayed where I was, my life was in great danger. I was clammy, sweaty scared.

Though not at that time religiously inclined, I prayed. Then I put the nose toward the ground and held it on a steep glide, peering ahead into the murk. Presently I saw a farmhouse immediately ahead. I held a wing on it, circling, and saw a small pasture where a crash landing could be made. Gliding in for the landing, scarcely ten feet off the ground, I could see under the cloud structure. The farmhouse was high on a hillside; below was clear air over a long valley. I flew on. In a quarter of an hour safely landed at destination limp with and wonder. A greater than



I was my airport, gratitude power myself

response to my prayer, restored me to safety! This happened seven years before I came into AA.

I did not hang on to this spiritual insight. After a day or two of awed reflection I forgot it, resumed my usual ways and usual drinking, which was progressing toward a climax. Seven years later, again fogged in, with all courses of action blocked in alcoholic impasse, I met some people who had "come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." Remembering then my deliverance from the cloud-shrouded hills, it was easier than it might otherwise have been to believe as they did.

But in such a world as ours, this belief has never been easy to come by, or to hold on to. Whenever you try to say how you felt about a certain topic at a given time in your life, you have to take into account your moods. At various times, in different states of mind, my attitudes toward the issues raised in Step Two have ranged all the way from no, through maybe, to an ecstatic yes.

At this point it would not be out of place if somebody asked, "Who are you, and who cares about your attitudes?" So I identify myself: I'm an anonymous hanger-on in a worldwide battle for daily sobriety. I'm conducting a kind of one-man durability test, now in its fourteenth year, on the Twelve Steps. Seven years ago I made some notes called "Twelve Steps and the Older Member," discussing the changing, growing meaning of the Steps as the years went by. Now another seven years have passed; time for another check. These are only comments; I write with no authority, and with an awareness that my pretensions could dissolve into a tincture most any day. Still, the project seems worth while. Somebody else may get to thinking, and set the group wisdom to working on matters that will concern us all more and more as time goes on.

In everyday language, what we're up against in Step Two is this matter of whether there really is an invisible Higher Power who is willing to help a troubled person if asked. In a work-a-day world that takes no such power into its practical calculations, can a person reasonably "come to believe" such a thing? This issue ranks high among those that really stump AA candidates and AAs, old and young. It has been, at times, a very hard one for me.

Oddly enough, the more desperate I am, the easier it is for me to believe it. In the beginning, I was like a man pursued to the brink of a swimming pool by a pack of wolves--which, incidentally, can't swim. "Jump in," friends said, "and paddle around in safety until the wolves go away."

"No," I said, "the pool is empty, I'll only break my head."

"No," they said, "the water's so clear you can't see it, but it's there; jump!"

So, not knowing, I jumped, and found they were right; the water was there, sustaining, healing, protecting.

The difficulty of belief comes, in my own case, after desperation has passed. Self-reliance, which I had always been taught was a virtue, again takes over. Almost before I know it I have come, again, to believe that chain activity involving myself and other self-reliant persons can accomplish about everything necessary--if only they'll do

as I wish. But of course they don't, and I'm once more in the cycle of frustration, resentment, anger and a new desperation--stopping short, so far, thanks to God and to AA, of the old-time defiant binge.

This, of course, is not sanity, and I have to go back to Step Two again to be restored. I wanted a serene, unruffled sobriety, but this has not been granted; even my sobriety has been stormy. I have often been impatient that the Higher Power who restores my sanity does not *keep* it restored, that the belief shining so clear and bright on Wednesday morning is often fogged in doubt by Thursday night. This has given me a hard time, and I'll tell you how, after fourteen years of working at it, I have, for the time being, puzzled it out:

Moods are emotions; they come and go, swing high, swing low, hit joy and depression. If God had given us only moods we'd be at their mercy, but He gave us something else--intelligence. Intelligence tells us that if a thing is true it stays put, regardless of our mood. Two and two equals four for the happy mathematician and for the sad one, and right here is where I am rescued. Twenty-one years ago a Higher Power saved me from some aeronautical difficulty on urgent request. Fourteen years ago the same Power gave me sanity through an alcoholic haze, after all the sanity-producing authorities of science had been invoked and failed.

Seven years ago I was able to write, "He is as awesome and as new, as spontaneous and as undiscovered, as friendly and as potent today." In all the intervening years I have watched the same Power restoring others to sanity. This has provided my intelligence with ample cause to believe, with an enduring certainty and regardless of the day's mood, that a power greater than ourselves can restore.

It leaves open, of course, the pressing question, "Why don't I *stay* restored?" This, I think, is business for other Steps. I am one who holds the Steps should be taken one at a time. Step Two asks only the acceptance of a simple, world-shaking proposition that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. When that proposition is accepted as a working belief, the Step is taken. Intellectual certainty, based on accumulated evidence, can buttress the belief against the onslaught of shifting moods. For myself, come up or come down, the years have brought no reason to recant. A Power greater than myself can restore me to sanity any time He wants to, there's absolutely no question about it. J.E. Guiford, Connecticut

### **Have you or your sponsees ever attended an AA Conference??**

This year's Spring Conference in Mt. Vernon, March 7-9 will be a great place for experiencing the AA Program in action. Ask around, share a room or ride with fellow AA,s already planning to attend. Get creative & start your own group of attendees. Looked at your coin lately.... Unity, Service, & Recovery..... more info=  
Area21.2008springconference@yahoo.com

\*\*\*HOPE TOSEE YOU THERE\*\*\*

District 12  
Little Book Store  
515 Bonnymeade Dr.  
Champaign, IL 61821-3490  
217-359-3457

## **Am I a Bleeding Deacon?**

**An older member notes some things that put a strain on his resolve not to be one**

I'VE been a member of AA for many years and I guess I'm bleeding. What makes me bleed? Well, to be blunt and honest about it, I'm getting more and more critical of what I see happening in some groups these past few years. It fills me with apprehension that many are overlooking the basic principles our fellowship was founded on. This state of mind is not conducive to practicing tolerance as I should.

It is gratifying to see so many new and young faces in the program, but unfortunately too large a percentage of these are continuing their 'research' and after one, two, three and even more years have not made any appreciable progress. So I bleed when I discover that they have never read the Big Book; they have no idea how AA started; they have a vague acquaintance with the Twelve Steps, and even less with the Twelve Traditions. General Service to them could be a firm of tax accountants.

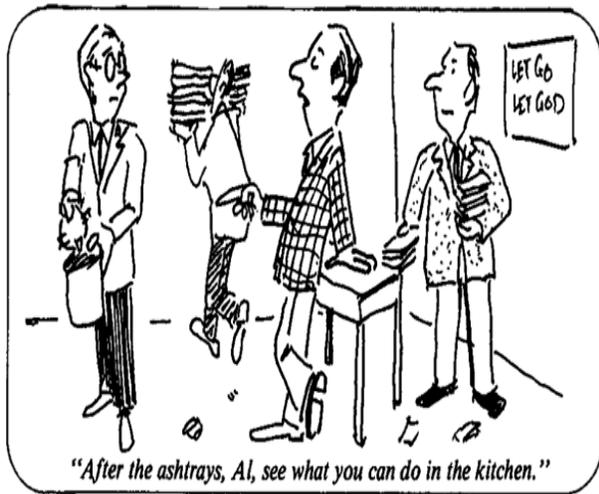
I bleed profusely when at some open meetings the under-teen-agers are cutting up so, one could not possibly give his attention to the speaker. It must be especially trying to a new member giving his or her first lead, which in my book is a very important milestone. I'm a great believer in open meetings. My wife has attended them regularly throughout these years, consequently she is as well, if not better versed in many aspects of the program than I am. But heaven forbid that our regular meetings become a social function for the whole family. Sobriety is a serious business--let's keep it that way.

Don't get me wrong. The AA social activities are ever so important, but let's keep them where they belong--over coffee and cakes after the meeting, good old-fashioned AA gatherings in the home (kitchen variety), group picnics and so forth. And speaking of coffee, I bleed a little when members beat a path back and forth to the coffee urn while a meeting is in session. Believe me, I, too, have wanted to do this on many an occasion, even to the point of walking out on a global bar-by-bar story. But AA has taught me that though the speaker may not be doing me much good (outside of the opportunity to practice tolerance--and that's good) he sure is doing a lot for himself and that is one of our cardinal principles.

Mr. AA--now there's a moniker. It has been bestowed on many deacons for their untiring efforts in sponsorship, group and club activities. Thank God for them, but I bleed when I see a few who want to run the group with the iron hand of a dictator. Oh--they mean well, but they have forgotten "they are but trusted servants" and should give thought to the wishes of the group. No--they feel it their duty to pick the chairman, speaker, secretary and treasurer on the theory that the younger members haven't been in long enough to know what it's all about. Surely this is not the way to teach or build a solid foundation.

These are a few samples of AA doings--or should I say dangers, that make me bleed. I'll wager there are other Bleeding Deacons who have similar symptoms. Here is a good transfusion--join me in taking a keener interest in your group and those you visit. Good AA principles and their practice can be instilled by quietly talking to one or more members over a cup of coffee after the meeting, in your home, during a lunch date or just an automobile ride in the country. Before you do, brush up again on the Big Book, the "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions," "AA Comes of Age," and "AA Today." They are good reading and down-right essential to your sobriety and mine.

Anonymous, Tennessee



### “There is a Solution”

As we read our way through the Big Book, and begin to understand the fatal nature of our malady, the world seems to become darker and darker. Without drink to smooth out the rough edges of daily life, we wonder if we will be able to survive the newly experienced pain and uncertainty of reality. Even though our lives as active drinkers were chaotic and destructive to ourselves and those about us, there was a certain comfort in the predictable drama. We knew the script.

Now we haven't had a drink in a while (2 days; 2 months; 2 years; 20 years) and we find ourselves on the stage of life without an idea of what part we play. Our old script doesn't work. Where do we find the script that everyone else is using? How do we find out what page they are on? What is my part in the real drama of life?

What a terribly awkward place to be: knowing our old pattern of drinking doesn't work and not knowing what will work. We don't know which way to turn!

Here is the good news!

“There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.

The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences (discussed in the appendix of the Big Book) which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.’  
(Page 25 - Alcoholics Anonymous - the basic text of our program!).

Once we witness the fact that others in AA have found a way out of the dark world of alcoholism and the confusing uncertainty of early sobriety, we seek them out, individually and in groups, to find out how they did it. We ask questions. We read what they have read. We think about what they have thought about. We discuss it. We begin to practice it. We ask ourselves in the quiet moments of private prayer, “Is my life better; even a little better since we joined AA? Have I begun to ‘believe that a Power Greater than ourselves can restore me to sane living?’” If so, we admit this belief and become willing to begin to trust.

Step One describes the PROBLEM.  
Step Two describes the SOLUTION.

Do we want the PROBLEM or the SOLUTION? Do we want the familiar pain and destruction of alcoholism? Or, do we want to begin developing ‘a design for living’ that REALLY WORKS?

Do you have a problem answering this question? Ask a person who made the decision to return to alcohol. Ask a person who made a decision to seek the solution. Listen carefully to both sides. They each have a lesson to teach. Then MAKE A DECISION!

May God bless you and keep you til then.  
Anonymous Champaign, IL

**WE = District 12 =  
C-U, Rantoul, Monticello, Mattoon, Charleston,  
Tuscola, and all other groups in Area 21 ARE  
HOSTING**

**THE 2009 AREA 21 SPRING CONFERENCE**

"Don't think of it as having a bad day.

Think of it as Second Step work."

### The Fountainhead

"I joined a group that devotes its closed meetings to Step discussions. Most of the members had their own concepts of a personal God; the atmosphere of faith surrounding me was so marked that I thought at times I was on the point of joining in it. I never did. And yet I found the Steps revealing new depths of meaning with each discussion. In **Step Two**, the 'Power greater than ourselves' meant AA, but not just the members I knew. It meant all of us, everywhere, sharing a concern for each other and thereby creating a spiritual resource stronger than any one of us could provide. Another woman in my group believed that the souls of dead alcoholics, including those of times before AA, contributed to this fountainhead of goodwill. The thought was so beautiful that I wished I could believe it, too." Came To Believe, Page 84

### A TRUE STORY:

At a district meeting recently, a member made a motion that we donate a couple hundred dollars to outfit the hospitality room at the upcoming New Hampshire AA Convention with refreshments. His motion was seconded, and the chair asked if there was any discussion before the vote. To clarify the motion, I raised my hand and asked if "a couple hundred" meant "two hundred dollars." "Doesn't 'a couple' mean 'two'?" he quipped. "I don't know," I said. "I used to stop for 'a couple' of beers almost every night." Andy H. Portsmouth, NH

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you on behalf of your 2008 SIA Spring Conference planning committee. In the spirit of the conference--Communication & Participation--I am asking for your help. Throughout the conference there will be a hospitality room open with coffee, soft drinks, light snacks & FELLOWSHIP!

We would be grateful for donations from your groups. Donated items may be dropped off at the hospitality room at the beginning and through-out the conference. Donations via check may be mailed to: 2008 SIA-21 Spring Conference P.O. Box 42 Nashville, IL 62263 Or Yvonne Fourez, Co-Chair & SIA Treasurer 5668 Yellow Banks Road Mulkeytown, IL 62865 Thank you for your participation in this event! Let's have some FUN! Yours in service, Yvonne

### SPEAKER MEETINGS / EVENTS

Saturday 2/9/08

AS BILL SEES IT Speaker- Donna  
8pm HALL(every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday)

Sunday 2/10/08

2009 Area 21 Spring Conf Planning Mtg.-4pm HALL

Saturday 2/16/08

Serenity Shack Speaker- Mark G.  
8pm SHACK(every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday)

Sunday 2/17/08

District 12 Traditions Panel-10am  
HALL - Guest Elmer Chaney  
District 12 Business Meeting-2pm HALL(every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday)

Thursday 2/28/08

HOW group Speaker- John III, Memphis, TN  
8pm HALL(every 4<sup>th</sup> hursday)

Friday 3/07/08

1st Friday Food & Fellowship - Spaghetti  
6:30-? SHACK(every 1<sup>st</sup> friday)

HALL = 718 S. Randolph, Champaign  
SHACK = 117 N. Ohio St. Rantoul

2008 Southern Illinois Area -21 AA Spring Conference

Hosted by SIA-21 & District 7

March 7 - 9, 2008

## "Communication and Participation - The Key to Unity and Self Support"

**Friday:** 4:00pm Registration Opens  
7:45pm Opening of the Conference  
8:00pm Chuck A. - Evansville, IN

**Saturday:** 8:00am Panels begin  
1:30pm Joe O. - St. Louis, MO (Al-Anon)  
6:00pm Banquet  
7:30pm Program begins  
8:00pm Don M. - Louisville, KY.  
10:00pm Dance/Band - Sullivan Drive

**Sunday:** 10:00am Bill H. - Mt. Vernon, IL.

1 - 4 per room  
\$70.00 + tax per night  
You must reserve by Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>  
and mention SIA Spring  
Conference for special rate.  
Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn  
222 Potomac Blvd.  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864  
800-243-7171 / 618-244-7100



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Doug H. (618) 292-1854 or Yvonne F. (618) 967-8174  
Area21.2008springconference@yahoo.com

### Registration Form

One person per form please  
may be copied

Pre-registration \$20.00  
Banquet \$19.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks Payable and Mail to  
2008 SIA-21 Spring Conference  
PO Box 42  
Nashville, IL 62263

Please Check Only One

AA \_\_\_\_\_ Al-Anon \_\_\_\_\_ Alateen \_\_\_\_\_ Guest \_\_\_\_\_

Deadline for Mail Registration is: March 1<sup>st</sup> 2008  
Must Reserve Banquet by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008