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A.A. In The Courts

Over the past three decades there have been several court matters where in AA's name has been brought up. There is a constant rumor mill about what these cases involved and what they mean.

A.A.: is it a RELIGION?

No lawsuit has ever been filed against A.A. forcing it to defend that it is or is not a religion.

One of the most notable cases, often misconstrued by many, engaged the issue of the government being involved in favoring a religious toned program, which would violate the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. The 1996 case file in the New York Court of Appeals, Griffin v Coughlin, is often cited as proof that A.A. is a religion.

This case specifically deals

with a prison inmate who was offered expanded visitation privileges on the condition that he participated in A.A. The inmate argued that this violated his First Amendment rights.

"Thus, while it is of course true that the primary objective of A.A. is to enable its adherents to achieve sobriety, its doctrine unmistakably urges that the path to staying sober and to becoming "happily and usefully whole," is by wholeheartedly embracing traditional theistic belief. These expressions and practices constitute, as a matter of law, religious exercise."
— The New York Court of Appeals, Griffin v. Coughlin, 1996.

A.A. was never on trial in this matter. What was on

trial was the government requiring attendance at a program that has a traditional theistic belief WITH-OUT providing an alternative non-theistic program. It is solely the responsibility of the defendant to request an alternative and pay all costs associated with it, for example treatment, transportation and/or therapy.

The theistic belief is that a power greater than yourself exists. Some cannot accept that there is a power greater than themselves, which is their constitutional right. Mandating attendance to an organization that encourages belief in a power greater than oneself was the point that was on trial.

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A.A. Comes to East Central Illinois

A gentleman from Charleston named J. E. N. was the first to contact the Alcoholic Foundation on February 6, 1947:

I have contacted the Chicago group of the A.A. and they referred me to you in regards to an A.A. group in my locality. They

said the nearest group was Decatur, Ill. And that you might have some correspondence from this group.

The Chicago group told me you might give me some information on starting a group in my home town but as it is a small community and we

have no hospitals for alcoholics, , I don't see just how I could go about it.

This was followed with a letter on March 28, 1947:

I have been practicing the ways of the A.A.'s and I find they are very beneficial to me. Continued page 4

Big Book Trivia

March Answers:

How to Win Friends and Influence People, Part 3, Chapter 3, Page 171.

Extra Credit:

Common Sense of Drinking, the quote is "Half measures are of no avail". Bill also "borrowed" the Man of Thirty Story

April Question:

What was the original intent and use of Dr. Silkworth's letter pages xxv and xxvi.

Extra Credit:

Who is the original author of the quote attributed to Herbert Spenser on page 568

Did you know?

That the quote was

first used by Ray C. in his story An Artists Concept (replaced in the Second Edition). Ray C was also the artist that designed the original jacket for the First Edition Big Book. Affectionately known as the Circus Jacket for his creative use of bright colours, like those from a Circus.

In 1937 Bill attended a Dale Carnegie public speaking course and became very interested in Carnegie's methods. Part 3 of How to Win Friends and Influence Others is titled 12 Ways To Win People To Your Way Of Thinking, and the summary "In A Nutshell" reads as if it is straight from Working With Others. In it's 1939 review of the Big Book the New York Times slammed the Big Book and compared it to a Dale Carnegie work.

A.A. In The Courts

The German Copyright Infringement Lawsuit

In 1997 A.A. World Services entered into a lawsuit with a German member of A.A. for translating and distributing copies of the First Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* in German. The core of the suit was twofold. First, the international copyrights of the First Edition, with a copyright date of 1939, had not expired outside of the United States; second, that the translation being distributed had changed the wording throughout the book from Spiritual to Psychological and thereby altering the message of A.A.

After reviewing all options in the November 1, 1997 General Service Board Minutes report "The Board then adopted the following resolution: Resolved: that the AAWS Board recognizes its responsibility to preserve and protect the copyrights held in trust for all of A.A., both here

in US/Canada, and throughout the world. The AAWS Board further recognizes that unchallenged infringement of our copyrighted literature seriously impacts the future growth of A.A. overseas."

In May 1999 the German Court ruled in favor of AAWS and the German General Services Board and again in October 2003 the German Appeals Court upheld the ruling and ordered the defendant pay all court costs and legal fees.

In a 2006 letter, Gary K., the Chair of the Board of AAWS wrote "For more than four years, we and the General Service Board of A.A. in Germany used every possible means of communication to reason with the individual." And "When all avenues and efforts to reason with the individual had been exhausted, we learned that he was printing and distributing unauthorized Big Books in Finnish, Hebrew, Rus-

sian, and Spanish, as well as German. We faced our responsibilities to A.A. as a whole in 1997 when A.A.W.S., publisher of Conference approved, copyrighted literature, requested that a German Court grant an order that the defendant cease and desist all "A.A." publications in any language."

"The German Court decreed that the defendant must reimburse A.A.W.S. and A.A. in Germany for legal expenses, including attorney fees. Early in 2004, we and the German General Service Board offered the defendant an opportunity to forgo reimbursement of legal costs and fees provided the defendant does not publish or distribute Conference approved literature in any language or country, now or in the future, and accepts all other stipulations in the Court's order."

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What Does 'Crosstalk' Have to Do with Our Primary Purpose Box 459 1994 Vol. 40 No. 6 Reprinted with Permission of AAWS

Just what is this thing called "crosstalk"? Why are concerned A.A.s writing to the General Service Office for clarification about it? And, bottom line, what does it have to do with our primary purpose: "to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety"?

The word has been with us at least since 1887. Webster's 10th Edition defines crosstalk as "unwanted signals in a communication channel caused by transference of energy from another circuit"-as when, for instance, two members sitting side by side at an A.A. meeting carry on a private, yet not so quiet, conversation ... or when one member interrupts another rudely or inappropriately. But this is not the kind of crosstalk that members are asking about; specifically, it is traceable to a list of guidelines for behavior at A.A. meetings -erroneously attributed to "World Service"-that appears in 1992 in a central office newsletter and has since been reprinted and circulated more widely.

The guidelines state, in part that "Any comments, negative or positive, about another's share, experience, life, program or remarks are crosstalk-that is interference."... "The only appropriate comment about anyone else's share a speaker's or another member's is 'Thank you for your share.'" "A member may talk about his or her own experience as it relates directly or indirectly to another's share, but should not refer to that person's share. Even comments such as 'When you talk about. .. it reminded me

of my own experience.. ." are possibly inappropriate."

The so-called guidelines did not emanate from the General Service Office. What random investigation reveals is that they may have filtered into some A.A. groups through members who also attend other Twelve Step recovery groups. For example:

(1) In its literature, one fellowship includes a boxed item head, "Suggested Announcement Regarding Crosstalk & Feedback (adopted 12/13/87)." It reads: "In sharing during meetings, we proceed in an orderly, respectful manner. The chairperson (or speaker) will call on people to share. We do not interrupt one another or engage in discussion-this is called 'crosstalk.' While we encourage expressions of identification with a speaker and appreciation for speakers, we also do not judge or comment on what people say or tell them what to do--this is called 'feedback.' "

(2) Another anonymous organization, in it's "Suggested Meeting Format," asks attendees "to please not interrupt someone else's sharing not to make comments about other people's statements... and to talk only about yourself"

Although many self-help groups emulate A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, their practices often differ from ours in their respects. As they may have discovered in adapting the A.A. program to their own needs, that's sauce for the goose may be poison for the gander. Says Anne T., of

Rome, New York, who belongs to A.A. and also attends meetings of a different fellowship: "From the very beginning, one drunk talking to another has made the A.A. program go round. But in meetings (of the other fellowship), I feel, it makes sense to refrain from crosstalk. People are trying to free themselves from extraordinary shame. When someone shares in response to something I've said, that's okay, but only so long as there's not even a hint of censure, belittlement, scolding or preaching, all under the guise of sharing. Knowing there's no risk of judgment makes me feel safe."

Looking at the subject from an A.A.'s point of view, a G.S.O. staff member, says, "Comparing notes, many of us realized that nonjudgmental suggestions we had received in meetings, in response to something we had shared, was very beneficial to our recovery. It is how we learn, and that's what 'sharing experience, strength and hope' is all about. Also, there is a thin line between guidelines and rules; and experience suggests that in A.A.'s 'benign anarchy,' rules, rigidity and attempts to control don't work very well."

Whether an individual A.A. group chooses to include the crosstalk 'guidelines' in its meeting format is entirely up to its group conscience to determine, of course. But please do not say that such guidelines came from the General Service Office.

Thanks to GSO Archives for finding this article

It is not known exactly which day of Bill's 11 day stay at Towns Hospital that he had his white light experience,

AA In The Courts continued

"The defendant has not responded to our offer. Therefore, we have asked that remedies stipulated in the Court's final order of October 2003 be fulfilled by the defendant.

While these matters were before the Court, we were constrained from discussing relevant details."

Baldwin Research vs A. A.

Baldwin Research is a company that provides substance abuse treat-

ment services.

In 1997 it sued A.A. in the Schenectady Civil Supreme Court, New York Index Number 000774/1997. The suit was for \$20 million and their claim for damages appears to have been based on what several members of A. A. said before, during, or after a meeting: that Baldwin's Treatment program didn't work. On October 21, 2002 the matter was set for trial. Review of the online court docket shows that the matter is

now disposed with no further information available. After reviewing numerous A.A.W.S. financial statements there have been no funds paid to Baldwin Research.

Every indication is that the Baldwin Research lawsuit was little more than a marketing ploy selling their alcohol and substance abuse solution.

"there are only two of us and we get together when convenient but we have two more prospects. One is going to Cleveland to take a treatment in the A.A. ward in a hospital there."

A.A. Comes to East Central Illinois

I wrote you at the time in regard to starting a group here in our community and you referred me to the Decatur group. I have contacted them and they offer assistance but my main trouble seems to be "new prospects" to work on. As we live in a small town of 9,000 it is hard to find out who is interested or not. At the time you sent me the literature you wrote me a letter stating you would list me as contact man from this vicinity. I think that would help me in finding someone interested to work on so you may send me inquired from this area if you wish.

On April 27, 1947 another letter was received by New York:

I wish to thank you for the literature you sent me for assistance in forming a group here in our community.

I have one "prospect" and we went to Decatur and visited the group there to find just how a meeting was conducted. The Decatur group was a very fine bunch of about 30 and you could certainly see the A.A. spirit among them.

You sent me a card for the master file but I am waiting a while to mail it in as there are only two of us and we just get together when convenient

but we have two more "prospects." One is going to Cleveland to take a treatment in the A.A. ward in a hospital there. In the mean time you can use me as contact man for this territory and as soon as we get organized I will mail the card with full particulars. We are finding it hard as we just don't know exactly what to do.

On August 1947 Charleston, Illinois was first listed in the August 1947 directory. J.E. N. was listed as the contact person for the group of 3. people.

Martin B

Next month Paris

Answering Service Needs Volunteers



**FOR IMMEDIATE
ASSISTANCE 24 Hours 7
Days a Week call (217)
373-4200**

These are important words to anyone seeking help. The responsibility is to insure that there are names on file with the answering service to respond when the call for help comes.

"I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help I want the hand of A.A. always to be there and for that I am responsible."

This is an opportunity to be involved in the very heart of A.A. Twelfth Step Work.

Co-Chair for the Treatment Center Committee:

The Co-Chair would assist in seeing that there are people to available to assist at A.A. orientations to spread the message of how and to assist in bridging from treatment to the outside world.

To learn about service opportunities with contact any District Chair or use the web sites contact page <http://aa-eci.org/contact/>

March Speakers

S.W.A.T. April 5 - Allie B.
Women's Step Study April 7 - Zelda
Cellar Dwellers - April 13 - Jack B.

YOUR GROUP GOES HERE let the newsletter know drop an email to newsletter@aa-eci.org

Announcements

New Meeting in Urbana:

Many Paths
Thursdays, 6-7 pm
309 W Green St, Urbana
(Unitarian Universalist Church)
Open Meeting - Lead Format
Many Paths has a more secular format than traditional AA meetings in order to serve the needs of those who identify as agnostic, atheist, freethinker, and for individuals sorting out their

personal spiritual beliefs or non--beliefs. We encourage a spirit of inclusiveness, tolerance and respect so that each one of us can find a path to sobriety within the fellowship of AA. All are welcome.

New Champaign Meeting

Noon at 120 S. Neil

New Mattoon Meeting: Saturday Night Live (open); Sat. 10 p.m. First United Methodist

12 Step Workshop: Saturday, April 11; 10 am to 5 pm; Windsor Road Christian Church 2501 Windsor Road, Champaign. It will be led by Mike L and Gary B. (both Indianapolis). Sponsored by A Vision For You meeting.

