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## All Words Are Not Equal

By Don P. Savoy, IL

In the tens of thousands of words written by Bill W. and the many hours of recorded talks by both Bill and Dr. Bob, and, for that matter, including the first 700 issues of the Grapevine, there is not one four-letter word. Why is that? Is it that neither Bill nor Bob ever used vulgar language? That doesn't seem likely. They lived in the real world. But it does seem clear they didn't include such words as part of their AA practice. They were on a spiritual journey; words had weight and were chosen carefully. And the fact that they chose to open and close meetings with words of

prayer says, even today, that their meetings, now our meetings, are meant to address a higher purpose. The question for us is, "Should we be guided by their example?"

I've been sober for almost thirty years now but I recall clearly that in my drinking days vocabulary had no limits. When alcohol was speaking it usually included plenty of profane language; swear words used for emphasis or exaggeration - expressing anger, astonishment, ridicule, indignation, humor or disparagement. That kind of language, just like liquor once did, still flows easily for some of us. As profane elixers these

words still have a good home in drunken speech - as well as the NFL, NBA, HBO, satellite radio, some work sites and the list goes on.

But is an AA meeting a similar place? When we meet in search of continued sobriety, when we seek a spiritual awakening, when we share our experience, strength and hope, do we honor the memory, the work, and even the genius of our founders by offering our testimony as a curse? Probably not.

*Continued on page 3*

## Bill's Words on Profanity

When reading any of Bill's writings it is important to understand that he was once a bar-room brawler and had even once lost a job for fighting with a Taxi Driver. He was no stranger to profanity or loud and aggressive behavior. His spiritual experience at Towns Hospital in December of

1934 changed him in such a way that he was never again documented as ever saying an abusive word towards anyone up until his death.

In a November 14, 1951 letter to a member Bill W. wrote: *Respecting obscenity or profanity at AA meetings, I most ardently hold with all you say. It revolts me quite as much as it does you. And I make no doubt that would go for*

*99% of us, too. Most off such speakers eventually get policed.*

*It is probably on A.A., that we carry the principle of tolerance over into license at times. Because there is no personal authority whatever among us, strange to say, all members are pretty reluctant to place a ban on [illegible] of anyone. This is true, even in still graver offenses. Continued on page 3*

## Big Book Trivia

### May Answers:

Page 15

We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek.

### Extra Credit:

The word fellowship occurs 40 times in the first 164 pages

### August Question:

What printing of the First Edition of the Big Book was Spiritual Experience changed to Spiritual Awakening

### Extra Credit:

What printing of the First Edition was ex-alcoholic changed to ex-problem drinker

**Did you know?** That in the 40's Los Angeles

Had a rule that if you missed two weeks of AA in a row you were expelled? That San Francisco had two warring sides, one that allow attendance at meetings first without working the steps, and the other required that the steps be worked before going to meetings. 12th Step calls were neutral ground.

The wording of Step 12 was first changed in the 2nd printing of the 1st edition in 1941. "as the result of these steps" was changed to "as the result of those steps." Father Ed Dowling expressed his dissatisfaction with the change in his address to the 1955 International Conference (see "AA Comes of Age" pg 256).

The wording of Step 12 was changed back to "as the result of these steps" in 1956 in the 2nd printing of the 2nd edition (there was no Conference advisory action on this).

## Excerpt from pages 2 & 3 Experience, Strength and Hope concerning removing profanity from the Big Book and future AA Literature

"Some of the rough edges found in the first edition stories (the use of profanity, for example, references to specific religious beliefs, and several rather disorganized stories) would be smoothed out in those chosen for later editions. When Bill W. began the revision, he laid out some general guidelines: "Since the audience for the book is likely to be newcomers, anything from the point of view of content or style that might offend or alienate those who are not familiar with the program should be carefully eliminated. . . . Profanity, even when mild, rarely contributes as much as it detracts. It should be avoided." In a letter to a prospective contributor, Bill set forth the framework he was seeking: "We are looking for straight personal narratives which describe the drinking history, how the newcomer arrived in Alcoholics Anonymous, how A.A. affected him, and what A.A. has since accomplished for him."

Over the decades the General Service Conference has jealously guarded the AA Message of Hope and has been diligent in to insure that no profanity creeps into any public facing aspect of Literature, Public Service Announcements or AA Conferences.

In the Champaign Urbana area there have been no fewer than two meetings that have over the years had to relocate as a direct result of the use of profanity either before, during or after the meetings. We have to respect our hosts' policies!

As members of AA it is our responsibility to be the example of sober living and to keep Bill's words in mind that profanity rarely contributes as much as it detracts. AA's message is one of attraction and it is far easier to attract with honey than with salt and vinegar.

Do you want to be labeled the person that has quit drinking but still swears like a drunk? Who would see a message of hope and recovery in that behavior?

## All Words Are Not Equal

Language has changed in seventy-five years. But the problem is more than the passing of time and a turn to less formal speech between friends and associates. Today there is a pervasive familiarity in our culture and meetings are no exception. Deference of any kind is a sometime thing. The notion of “mixed company” is anathema to many. Today people assume intimacy and informality in almost any setting, maybe especially so in the friendly atmosphere of our meetings. After all, we are a devoted fellowship of alcoholics looking for a better way of life. But we are wrong to believe that our common purpose demands the lowest common denominator of raunchy slang or that cleverness and passion presumably excuse rudeness. Assumptions like these have infected many an AA meeting.

Is it possible that the “Live and let live” slogan has been warped by common misuse to mean, “I will speak as I please and you can just get over it.” At some meetings you could draw that conclusion.

What part of humility and grace do we exhibit by swearing? What kind of gratitude and spiritual growth do we exhibit by cursing our boss, our car, our sponsor? What kind of hope and peace of mind do we exhibit when we verbally punish “they, them and those” who complicate our lives? We don’t show anything very sober by such talk. We can leave those words back at the bar where others are still trying to find their bottom.

Many of our meetings take place in churches and while AA pays rent, we are still guests. Common courtesy insists we not foul their facilities or their faith with our curses.

If we are living examples of the program, we might consider our common welfare. We recite it often enough. With that in mind, why challenge or alienate anyone with endless four-letter adjectives? Are we truly extending the helping hand of AA with a string of expletives? Hardly. Why not display the sobriety and wisdom we pray for? Let it be shown in our self-restraint and heart-felt story telling. Let us demonstrate it with our insights into sobriety and grace by association with other people doing the same thing. As individuals we are not done yet. AA is not done yet. It is all a miraculous work in progress and it’s good. But it can be made better and we can be better.

## Bill’s Words on Profanity

*Happily, group opinion plus a thorough castigation by John Barleycorn, usually controls in the end. These attitudes may seem unsafe to you. Yet, with some exceptions such as the one you know, they have worked out pretty well.*

In November of 1966, Bill W. wrote to an A.A. member from Michigan who asked the question “How do you stop some speakers from swearing at meetings, or do you just go ahead and let them swear?” Bill W. replied: “You raise the question of swearing from the platform at open meetings. At one time or another many perfectly good A.A.’s fall into this way of trying to be impressive. I have, in earlier years, been reminded by my friends that I shouldn’t do this either. It is a rather silly business, and it is offensive to use A.A.’s and especially to friends of A.A. who visit meetings. Of course this is a well known fact. Now when it comes to writing letters of protest to stop this sort of thing—well, I’m afraid I shouldn’t do that. It is my experience that when I intervene in what is a local situation, it only makes matters worse. Why can’t people on the Committee quietly buttonhole the people involved? A good-natured reminder should be enough.

In summary Bill points out how he does not like profanity and that such language can cast a bad light on AA. He goes on to recommend a good-natured reminder or the power of a group conscience as the preferred solution.

Adding a simple line to the opening of the meeting such as “The absence of profanity will offend no-one” will easily set the mood.

# CHAMPAIGN-URBANA

# SOBERFEST 2015

**Saturday, September 26, 2015**

**Urbana Civic Center**

**108 E. Water Street, Urbana IL**

**Doors Open/Registration – 9:00 a.m.**

### Schedule of Speakers

10:00 a.m.	Bob D., Las Vegas, NV - 36 years sobriety
11:15 a.m.	Jessica V. Louisville, KY – 8 years Al-anon
12:15 p.m.	Lunch Break (off-location on your own)
1:30 p.m.	Sheldon F., Las Vegas, NV – 19 years sobriety
2:45 p.m.	Panel on 9 <sup>th</sup> Step
4:00 p.m.	Eden L. Anchorage, AK – 21 years sobriety
5:30 p.m.	Catered buffet dinner by Hickory River BBQ
7:30 p.m.	Gary B., Indianapolis, IN - 50 years sobriety

**Big Book Trivia – Grand Prize Raffle – Door Prizes – Snacks & Refreshments**

**COME JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL EVENT CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SOBERFEST**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF TICKETS @\$20 EACH: \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Payment and this form to: 2015Soberfest, P.O. Box 0261, Savoy, IL 61874-0261**

**ORDERS RECEIVED AFTER SEPTEMBER 17th WILL BE FILLED IF TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE**

**\*\* ABSOLUTELY NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR – TICKET REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION BEFORE 8 PM\*\***

# 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.

Additional names are need to help in providing rides to those visiting or in need of a meeting.

*To learn about service*

*opportunities with contact any District*

*Chair or use the web sites*

*contact page*

<http://aa-eci.org/contact/>

## The AA Responsibility Statement Explained

"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." Was adopted at the First International Conference in 1955. The statement was adopted with A.A.'s singleness of purpose in mind, "To stay sober and help other alcoholics to recover from alcoholism." Too often this statement is misconstrued that A.A. should help everyone with every problem. It's God's responsibility to take care of the universe. It is A.A.'s responsibility to help the alcoholic. To this end the Responsibility Statement might be best stated. "I am responsible, when anyone anywhere reaches out for help with the malady of alcoholism I want the hand of A.A. always to be there and for that I am responsible." As we become productive members of society and practice these principles in all of our affairs it is only natural to want to help others in areas outside of A.A.'s singleness of purpose, this is the individuals choice. A.A.'s sole responsibility is to help other alcoholics and has no outside opinions or affiliations.

## Announcements

The Tuesday 7:30 women's meeting at Westminster Presbyterian is moving as of September 1st to Grace Lutheran on Springfield and Prospect and we are changing the speaker to the third Tuesday starting September 15th will be Phaedra and will stay third Tuesday after that. It will still be first Tuesday in August at Westminster and it will be Jeanie from Ohio.

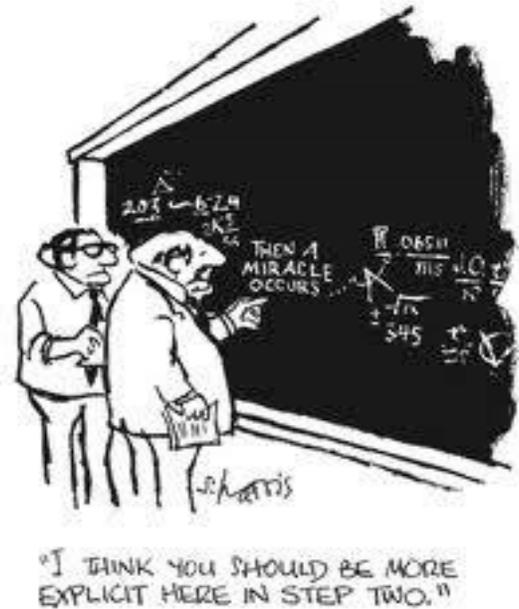
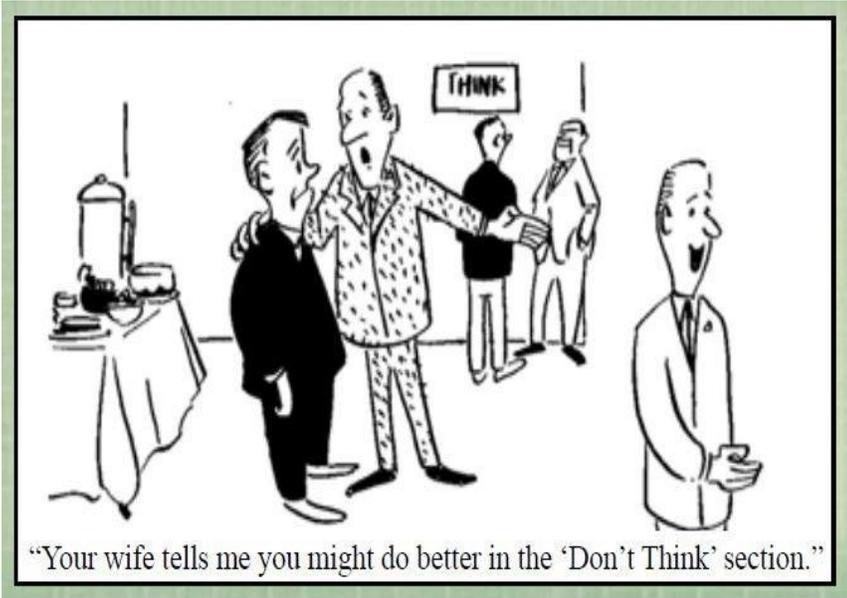
H.O.W. Group on Monday and Thursday at 7:00 PM; Has moved. Meeting Location: Presence Health Hospital Auditorium B, 1400 West Park Street, Urbana; It is a closed meeting except fourth Thursday for Open .

In 2016 The Friday Night Fellowship, formerly known as the Friday Night Study Group will be celebrating 50 years in 2016.

If anyone has any information about whatever happened to the Champaign County Group that originally appeared in the

AA National Directory in 1954., please drop a note to newsletter@aa-eci.org

This was the first publically recorded / published group in Champaign and appears to have been lost to sands of time.



**At the District Business Meeting July 19<sup>th</sup> ...**

DCM Mona Lee H. announced that the GSR Workshop scheduled for next month in Mattoon has been cancelled.

The District voted to bid for the December 2016 Area Assembly to be held in Champaign. The bid will be made at the upcoming September Area assembly.

**Committee Reports**

Corrections Committee chair Mike K. reported that a new meeting at the Men’s Downtown Jail on Fridays at 9 am needs volunteers to attend the meeting. You have undergo a background check to be cleared to enter the jail, you cannot drop in. The committee is also collecting issues of the Grapevine. Contact Mike K. at [corrections@aa-eci.org](mailto:corrections@aa-eci.org) or speak to him at a meeting.

Terri M., Grapevine Committee chair, has put together subscription information packets for groups thinking about getting a subscription for the Grapevine for their group. If interested, see her or email her at [grapevine@aa-eci.org](mailto:grapevine@aa-eci.org)

Meeting List Co-Chair Liza W. reported that the meeting list revisions were being finalized and a new printing would be ordered by the end of the month.

PICPC Chair Russ S. reported that the video PSAs ordered from GSO were rejected by local stations because of format incompatible, but that he would investigate alternative formats they could use.

Treatment Centers Committee Co-Chairs Mark G. and Sherri G. reported that anyone now serving on a panel at the Pavilion should contact her so she can determine which panels still need volunteers.

The next District Business meeting will be Sunday, August 19 at 2pm at Fellowship Corner.

**District 12 Officers and Committee Chairs**

- DCM                   Mona Lee H. ([dcm@aa-eci.org](mailto:dcm@aa-eci.org))
- Alt. DCM            Michael G. ([alt-dcm@aa-eci.org](mailto:alt-dcm@aa-eci.org))
- Secretary           Katrina R. ([secretary@aa-eci.org](mailto:secretary@aa-eci.org))
- Treasurer           Cheri P. ([treasurer@aa-eci.org](mailto:treasurer@aa-eci.org))
- Corrections         Mike K. ([corrections@aa-eci.org](mailto:corrections@aa-eci.org))
- Treatment Facilities Mark G. & Sheri G.  
([treatment-centers@aa-eci.org](mailto:treatment-centers@aa-eci.org))
- Meeting List        Liza W. & Mona M.  
([meeting-list@aa-eci.org](mailto:meeting-list@aa-eci.org))
- Answering Service Antonia D. and Reuben L  
([answering-service@aa-eci.org](mailto:answering-service@aa-eci.org))
- Newsletter          Martin B ([newsletter@aa-eci.org](mailto:newsletter@aa-eci.org))

- Grapevine          Terry S. ([grapevine@aa-eci.org](mailto:grapevine@aa-eci.org))
- PI-CPC              Russ S. ([picpc@aa-eci.org](mailto:picpc@aa-eci.org))
- Website             Rosemary T. ([webmaster@aa-eci.org](mailto:webmaster@aa-eci.org))
- Archives            Mike W.         ([archives@aa-eci.org](mailto:archives@aa-eci.org))

District 12 holds its meetings on the 3rd Sunday of every month at 2pm in the New Fellowship Corner at 1714 Springfield Ave, Champaign.

If you would like to submit something for publication, or just send comments or questions to the Committee, please email [newsletter@aa-eci.org](mailto:newsletter@aa-eci.org). Deadline for submissions is the 20th of each month.