

GRASS VALLEY FELLOWSHIP

HOSTS: Traditions Workshop of Alcoholics Anonymous
Saturday, March 21, 2021
10-11:30 a.m. (Zoom and Hybrid)

Written Materials from Event

In this document you will find speaker's scripts or notes/references of the Traditions Workshop that was held on March 21, 2021. Also, there will be a list of Conference Approved literature, a Twelve Traditions Checklist and other info at the end of the document.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions of the speakers do not represent A.A. as a whole. They are here to share their own experience and their opinions are not in any way affiliated with the views of CNIA, District 20, or the Grass Valley Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our four speakers were Ken M., sobriety date: 11/17/1997 from Vacaville, Carole D., sobriety date: 1/5/1986 from Vacaville, Lorraine M., sobriety date: 9/20/1980 from Placerville, and Nancy K., sobriety date: 5/24/1972 from Galt, California.

Sarah M., from Grass Valley, California moderated and co-chaired the event. Her sobriety date is 8/1/1980. She read the long form of the Twelve Traditions throughout the event.

For Archives purposes: This document has been compiled by Sarah M. with the permission from the speakers. There were 93 people in attendance, 10 in the Grass Valley Fellowship room and 83 people on Zoom. People online were from Seattle, Sacramento, Paradise, San Francisco, Carmichael, Camarillo, Redondo Beach, Carmel, Redding, Chico, Finland and England. At least 25 of the 83 people on-line were from the Grass Valley area. There were 11 questions that got answered during Q&A portion of event. Sarah wishes to thank: Amy M. for co-chairing event, co-hosting Zoom, and creating the event flyer, Annette McT. for Hosting Zoom and handling the Questions and Answers, Carrie McT. and Cara W. for technical support, Connie S. for creating the hybrid event, and special thanks to our speakers, Ken M., Lorraine MacD., Carole D. and double thanks to Nancy K. for speaking and recruiting the other speakers!

The Twelve Traditions (The Long Form)

Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

Tradition One—*Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.*

Ken M.—Tradition One:

The following presentation is either my opinion which is based on my experience, or lots of stuff that's not my opinion, comes straight from our A.A. literature: Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Twelve Traditions Illustrated, Language of the Heart, and A.A. Comes of Age.

A.A.'s Twelve Traditions apply to the life of the Fellowship itself. They outline the means by which A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it, the way it lives and grows.

The Traditions Are Our 12 Biggest Mistakes 1935-1945

Twelve Points to Ensure our Future...appeared in the Grapevine in 1946-47...approved by the conference in 1950

What is A.A.'s primary purpose? To carry the message, the Steps are the message, the Traditions protect the message, the Concepts perpetuate the message. To me it means my job is to respect and protect those Traditions.

Embrace them, don't enforce them, enforcement is not effective! Our reaction can be much worse than the tradition infraction itself.

One – Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

Tradition 1: Spiritual principle: Our common welfare through unity, a most cherished principle (protect and care)

- The only Tradition we need! Says it all!
- The other 11 are a means to accomplish Tradition-1
- Sacrifice is the common thread woven through all of the Traditions
- The group is more important than the individual

Tradition Two—*For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.*

Carole D.—Tradition Two:

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscious. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

The short form of Tradition Two—longer than the long form—added “...Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern”. It was bold and risky—placing the responsibility for our Fellowship and the success of our program—carrying the message of hope and recovery from alcoholism—on each member through our Home Groups. The upside-down triangle has Groups at the top and our General Service Office (GSO) and the Conference at the bottom. Good leaders in A.A. serve those they lead. They take direction from the Groups they serve. Healthy groups listen and respect each member’s thoughts and opinions as we come together to come to an “Informed” Group Conscience for every aspect of how they carry their message of recovery.

Tradition Two is about Responsibility. It is my responsibility as a member of my Home Group to speak up; ask questions; and to listen. It is ironic that many described us Alcoholics as “Defiant Brats”. Yet by this Tradition the responsibility for the health and survival of A.A. was placed directly on us brats.

Informed Group Conscience. It is how each group decides everything from what brand of coffee we serve to opinions on Agenda Topics, or what we want our Intergroups/Central Offices to do—all equally important to the health of our Group, as well as A.A. as a whole. Many of us have sat in on long [and sometimes boring] discussions on so many decisions for our Groups. Six months to decide if we are going to rearrange our seating!!!! Yep—been there done that. When it was done—it was the best choice because we took the time to consider what we ultimately decided.

Home Group Pamphlet-- *“...Acting autonomously, each group charts its own course. The better informed the members, the stronger and more cohesive the group—and the greater the assurance that when a newcomer reaches out for help, the hand of A.A. always will be there. Most of us cannot recover unless there is a group. As Bill said, “Realization dawns on each member that he is but a small part of a great whole. ... He learns that the clamor of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes*

plain that the group must survive, or the individual will not."
("The AA Group" Pamphlet, page 10)

Our fellowship—Our Home Groups—thrive when we all participate in gathering an Informed Group Conscience. Your presence here today confirms that you care about your Home Group. Active participation results in an informed decision. Bill said "...The good is the enemy of the best..." A.A. deserves the best from me and for every member. If I sacrifice my wishes for the good of the whole—honor and support my Group's Conscience, I become a bit less selfish and a bit more open minded. My Group will be healthier because "we" made the decision and with that decision we commit to working together to implement and support it.

I learned this lesson many years ago during the conflict when smoking in meetings became illegal. A group of us "newbies" decided to invade home group business meetings to drum up support for violating the law and encouraging smoking. "New members are asked too much to quit drinking and smoking too, we said." "This is for their own good." By the way I was not a smoker but went along, because I felt a sense of power—and of course I was so self-sacrificing, caring only about the newcomer. Right—it was a totally selfish act—I think I got some sick sense of power by being a brat. Of course, established Home Groups quickly shut us down and told us thanks, but their Home Group Members would make their decisions. Some invited us to become Home Group Members and be part of their informed decision. Some responsible groups followed the law.

Not my home group—because we got away with smoking. The priest in our church was a heavy smoker and by us allowing to smoke he got away with it. Thank God when a new pastor came on board we had to stop and follow the law or move. Thank God the group conscience was to do the right thing and follow the law—we have been meeting in that place for 50 years. To have lost that meeting space, might have been demise of Group 86 and the message of hope we have carried over these past 35 years might of signed the death warrant of many suffering alcoholics.

My experience has taught me that participation in gathering a group conscience has helped me stay sober, because I get out of MY way and really care about the alcoholic sitting next to me and what they have to say. It is a privilege as well as my responsibility to express my opinion on any subject that affects my Home Group and A.A. as a whole.

The informed group conscience comes by respectfully listening to each member—not the loudest or the most sober—but the quiet newcomer who reminds me—we are each here in the Group to stay sober and pass on this remarkable message of recovery from our disease. The Group's life and

health comes before “my opinion” and it is only when we respectfully consider every opinion, question, and experience that we can come to the best decision for the health of our groups, our Districts, our Areas and A.A. as a whole.

Tradition Three—Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Lorraine M.—Tradition Three:

TRADITION THREE: The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking

Definition of desire: “a feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen.”

Based on that definition it is an “inside job”, just a feeling. If a person has a *feeling of wanting* to stop drinking, that is enough for membership. I have seen members get twisted because someone won’t introduce themselves “the correct way”. There are no rules that to be a member someone must say they are an alcoholic, dress a certain way, be here for only the “right reasons”, or even a requirement to be sober.

Membership is not limited to “pure alcoholics”. It doesn’t matter what other addictions a person may have, if alcoholism is among them, and he/she has a desire to not drink, he/she can be a member. Often newcomers will introduce themselves identifying with their other addiction and alcohol, causing some members a little anxiety. Again, there is no correct, required way to introduce ourselves. Patience, time and kindness will help us to have conversations about identification and unity.

This Tradition tells me that I don’t get to be the judge of another alcoholic and if you are good enough, or bad enough, to be a member. An arrest record, homelessness, owning a successful business, unemployed, having certain political or religious beliefs, being a celebrity or a skid row drunk—none of these are a requirement to be a member of A.A. We are all equal members when we say we are members.

We can’t keep someone out for behavior or crimes in their past. We don’t get to predict the future and keep anyone out for what we fear they may do

because of their past. Some of us have had the opportunity to practice this principle of A.A.—like when a mother stated she didn't feel safe bringing her child to a meeting because of crimes a member had committed in his past. The response may not be popular, but it was up to the mother to take the child to another place where she feels safe. This Tradition assures that the alcoholic is a member if he says so and can attend the meeting, as long as that behavior is not happening in the rooms now. It is important to remember that if we look the other way and allow a group to bully or push an undesirable alcoholic out of the meetings; we could each of us be next if the group decides something in our past is unforgivable.

Many of us have heard the story of Irma Livoni who was kicked out of A.A. on December 7, 1941. The (self-appointed) Executive Committee of the Los Angeles Group of A.A. sent her a letter, (see page 33 of this document) that her attendance was no longer desired and she knew the reason. A.A. legend has it that Irma left A.A. and died drunk that Christmas Eve, but this does not appear to be factual. She did leave A.A. and never returned but she married in 1943, spent time in a State Hospital for the Insane and died in 1974 in Arizona. It's unknown if she was sober or drunk at the time of her death. What we do know is she was denied the chance for sobriety that we have each been given. I think we may owe Irma, and those fearful letter writing members, a debt of gratitude because it is believed this story may have inspired Bill to write the third Tradition after he received a letter telling him about this incident. I know some of you, and I won't mention names, but I do believe there are some fallen women and definite crackpots among us here today, and this Tradition says "come on in and join us we are not the least bit afraid you will harm us. We just want you to have the same chance for sobriety that we have had."

Tradition Four—*With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.*

Ken M.—Tradition Four:

With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that

might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

Tradition 4: Our Common Welfare

This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; To keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, And the lives of those to come.

- Autonomy (\$10 word) If a group is waving the Tradition Four Group Autonomy flag, you can bet one, or more likely...several other traditions are getting run over!
- We cannot pick and choose which Traditions we're going to embrace, they're all equally important
- Tradition Four does not apply to the other 11 Traditions, Tradition Four is about customs, the group is free to choose what customs they follow. (the Twelve Traditions Illustrated)
- The most misunderstood, the most misinterpreted "every group has a right to be wrong"
- Groups have a right to be wrong, your right to be wrong does not make you right!
- Always looking to my groups effect on my neighboring groups and A.A. as a whole. What if...forget anonymity, forget attraction rather than promotion.
- We should always be very aware of what we're doing in our group and its effect on the rest of A.A., what we say, what we do, how we act are all very important! How we are perceived by the outside world is critical in our ability to carry the A.A. message.
- If I'm looking for a Tradition to justify my actions, I'm running down the wrong road. The Traditions should be used as a screen to filter ideas through.

Tradition Five—Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Lorraine M—Tradition Five:

TRADITION FIVE: Each Group has but one primary purpose....to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. When I first thought about speaking on this tradition I thought this would be a slam dunk

and my problem would be filling five minutes, but when I thought about my experiences with this tradition when it was and wasn't practiced I knew I could easily do it.

In Tradition Three, I spoke about each member introducing themselves anyway they choose to, there are no requirements or titles. But just because I may attach another issue to my introduction doesn't mean I get to discuss that in an A.A. meeting. What all of us members share in common is our alcoholism. When I attend a meeting my ego (whether it's big or small on that day) has to be set aside. I once thought I had the "right and responsibility" to share on my other addictions so anyone else with the same addiction could identify and feel a part of. I stopped doing that when I realized that I really wanted to be a part of A.A. and I no longer needed to feel different or special. Also, when I would go to a meeting with my husband, a real alcoholic who had never taken any drugs, and a member would share in detail about an addiction other than alcoholism my husband could not relate or identify. He had no other program to go to and each of us with other addictions do have other programs we can attend that carry the message of recovery for those particular addictions.

When two or more of us gather and call ourselves an A.A. meeting or group, no matter what other bonds or issues we share, our only purpose to meet is to carry the message of A.A. to another alcoholic. I intentionally did not say *suffering alcoholic* because we all have our own idea of what suffering looks like. It may not be the newcomer who has no money or place to live, but it could also be the long-timer who has begun to feel hopeless or has gotten a sense of complacency. So, in a meeting I don't get to look around and decide "there are no newcomers and everyone looks pretty good today and seem to be living the A.A. way of life perfectly" so let's spend our meeting time discussing other topics we may have in common.

We may be tempted to help a member with employment, housing, financial aid and other needs or give advice that is not in the A.A. message, and if some individual members choose to do this it needs to be outside of the group setting. As a group we cannot be a financial institution, or an employment agency. We need to be aware that as a group we cannot recommend a Certified Public Accountant, mechanic, or other service just because they are members. The A.A. group does not write letters for, nor go to court with a member, only individual members can do this if they choose, being careful to not imply they are representing A.A. or an A.A. group. These are some of the areas that well intentioned groups can get caught up in, not practicing Tradition Five.

In 1958 Bill wrote in "Problems Other Than Alcohol" about our singleness of purpose: *Sobriety-freedom from alcohol-through the teaching and practice*

of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an A.A. group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make nonalcoholic's into A.A. members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our A.A. groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone. (Reprinted from *Problems Other Than Alcohol* with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)

Sometimes I wonder if we would have an easier time with this Tradition if Bill had not used the wording PRIMARY PURPOSE, but instead used SOLE PURPOSE.

Tradition Six—*Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A.—and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.*

Nancy K.—Tradition 6:

(Nancy did a PowerPoint slide show for her presentations)

Hi, my name is Nancy Karvonen and I am an alcoholic from Galt, California. My sobriety date is May 24,1972. It's an honor to be this Traditions panel with these amazing members. It's exciting to be in a meeting at my hometown—Grass Valley.

Slide—Tradition Six

Grapevine— November 1948

Tradition Six points at the corroding influence of money, property, and personal authority. It also warns against the natural temptation to make alliances or give endorsements.

Primary Purpose was changed from *Primary Spiritual Aim* in 1949.

Slide—Early Aspirations

Tradition Six was born out of trial and error.

- We had big dreams in our early days of transforming the world.
- Build a chain of hospitals and have Dr. Bob run them. Remember that Dr. Bob was a proctologist.
- Rewrite school and medical textbooks. Make sure they get it right!
- Save the drunks on Skid Row. Clean them up and give them money. That'll fix 'em.
- Have judges parole alcoholics into our custody. Now we could be responsible for them.
- Clean up dope addiction and criminality. Why not?

Slide—What is Our Message?

We must stick to our primary purpose—carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

- Does A.A. fix drunks or is it an education project? Shoemaker stick to thy last.
- Is it spiritual or medical? How would we answer that?
- There is no such thing as an A.A. clubhouse. Clubhouses provide space for A.A. meetings. Although clubs are not part of A.A., it's recommended that they have managers that are A.A. members.
- We don't have A.A. treatment centers. However, many treatment centers use our Twelve Steps and often employ A.A. members.
- Under no circumstances may we endorse any related enterprise, no matter how good.

Bill W. said, "We of Alcoholics Anonymous cannot be all things to all men. Nor should we try."

Slide—Marty Mann

In the 1960's and 70's some A.A. members thumped for legislative reform: Marty Mann, founder of the National Council on Alcoholism, wanted alcoholism seen as a disease and not a moral issue.

Slide—Harold Hughes

Senator Harold Hughes from Iowa wanted to legalize liquor by the drink. Only beer to be consumed over the bar. Liquor and wine could be purchased only in state liquor stores and private clubs.

Slide—Mercedes McCambridge

Actress, Mercedes McCambridge testified before Senator Hughes' Subcommittee on Alcohol and Narcotics involving women.

They wanted legal reform for alcoholism. That resulted in our getting caught up in politics, which made for good press, but little else.

Slide—Outside Enterprises

We don't get involved in outside enterprises.

- It takes away from our primary purpose.
- We don't own any property.
- We may lease a physical space in which to hold our meetings. It's nice to know that we will be meeting in the same place next month as opposed to a month-to-month rent where we can get the boot at the drop of a hat.

A treatment center may hold outside events such as dances or picnics. They may seem related, but we don't endorse them or announce them in meetings.

A.A. does not disapprove of any non-A.A. literature and does not dictate what may or may not be used by A.A. groups. However, it is probably wise to use Alcoholics Anonymous World Services or Grapevine-produced literature as a basis for discussion at A.A. meetings.

Slide—Non-Conference Approved Literature

Imagine reading the Bible, Playboy, or comic books in meetings. Reading outside literature opens the door to anything being brought into meetings and dilutes and confuses our message, affecting A.A. as a whole.

Slide—How to Tell What is Conference-Approved Literature

If a book, pamphlet or audiovisual material says, *This is A.A. General Service Conference approved literature*, it's the real deal.

Slide—No Endorsements or Alliances

Our no-endorsement principle tells us that we cannot endorse or lend the A.A. name to any cause or outside enterprise other than our own. We cooperate, but do not affiliate.

- As an individual, it's ok to serve on outside committees related to alcoholism, but not as an A.A. member.

While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one. We avoid even the appearance of affiliation.

Tradition Seven—*The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.*

Lorraine M.—Tradition Seven:

Tradition Seven: Each A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions

Bill said that spirituality and money can mix in the hat and I know that in my own experience. When I was new to A.A. as a young single working mother I dreaded that basket coming in my direction. I was afraid to let go of any money, although my cigarettes cost a small fortune. As I stayed sober, I'd occasionally put in a dollar and that fear started slipping away as I felt more like a part of the group and I began to have a voice in group operation discussions. I started to feel a sense of responsibility to the group, not only financially but also a willingness to be of service, like cleaning or setting up a meeting.

Personal responsibility is easier to learn when the groups we belong to practice this tradition and are responsible to A.A. as a whole. A group that elects qualified treasures and chairs that practice the Traditions can be trusted to use our donations for our meeting expenses, A.A. services (GSO, Central Office, etc) and have a reasonable Prudent Reserve. Each group can decide how much of a prudent reserve is reasonable. I know I can get a little fussy when I have been at a meeting and they discuss using the 7th Tradition contributions for any purpose beside A.A. (like a bowling day or dance or other activities that are open for everyone to attend). I feel more secure when a separate basket is passed for those purposes and I know how my

little monies will be used. Each group is autonomous but I wonder if members of a meeting that uses the 7th Tradition for itself only, with nothing going to support A.A. as a whole, may be missing out on that great feeling of being part of the whole A.A.

To be really self-supporting we need to be aware of a bit trickier forms of contributions. I didn't understand why we shouldn't accept free rent from the church for a meeting space, but I got it when the pastor, who had been sending church members he thought A.A. could help, asked us to only refer to their conception of God. We need to be aware that at open meetings, conferences, or events attended by nonmembers, and perhaps the public, that if we don't explain our 7th Tradition statement and ask that only members contribute before passing the basket we will be accepting outside contributions. Just as we can't accept gifts and donations from others not in A.A., we should not allow a generous member to volunteer to solely cover the rent when the group runs a little short on funds one month. Both could lead to big-shotism and undue influence on our group.

I was part of a large group/service committee that accrued a large amount of excess funds. For months there was so much debate and discussion about what to do with the monies that we were often distracted from our spiritual purpose and sadly members of over 20 years in that group left and have not returned. I also know of a small group that had extra money and some members wanted to donate it to a recovery program whose clients had been attending the meetings. This set off arguments and eventually a split among members.

I'll finish with mentioning on-line meetings that don't take a virtual 7th Tradition because of the mistaken idea that "we have no expenses". GSO, Central Offices and other service committees still have insurance, rents, answering services, etc. This was very evident in the first months of this pandemic when donations drastically dropped and GSO had to go into its prudent reserve twice. Thankfully when word got out to the fellowship donations, both groups and personal, increased so they are no longer in the red. Our literature sales and the Grape Vine are still in the red. I wonder if newcomers who have only attended on-line meetings that don't take a virtual 7th Tradition may be missing out on the experience of beginning to feel a little responsibility to the group and A.A. as a whole.

Tradition Eight—*Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which might otherwise have to engage*

nonalcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.

Carole D.—Tradition Eight:

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

In 1937, Dr. Bob & Bill realized they had an answer—a recovery program that worked for alcoholics. In *A.A. Comes of Age*, Bill said:

"Hardly a fraction of the world's alcoholics could be expected to come to Akron or New York for treatment. Somehow, we would have to reach them where they were. Maybe we would have to get some of our members subsidized as missionaries to do this. It was already plain that most hospitals did not want to be bothered with alcoholics. Perhaps we would need to operate a chain of hospitals, and maybe the proceeds of such a venture would pay the missionaries."¹

This small group of hopeless drunks who had found an answer. Imagine their relief and enthusiasm. They could become paid missionaries—professionals—carrying our message around the world as they established a chain of the first treatment centers. Dr. Bob was skeptical and he was often the quiet voice of reason and sanity during those early turbulent times. Remember this first group of recovered alcoholics were desperate low-bottom drunks—they were grateful and enthusiastic. And they were broke.

Understandably they had conflicts about payment for services. During those early years it soon became apparent that, *"Every time we have tried to professionalize our Twelfth Step work, the result had been exactly the same: Our single purpose has been defeated."²*

Eventually we learned that we had to pay workers who were doing jobs that made Twelve Step work possible like the staffs our Intergroups/Central and GSO Offices. They earn salaries and benefits and are accountable to the organization they serve. Our small Intergroup is staffed by volunteers, which is our choice. This too is in accordance with Tradition 8 and is up to your local districts.

We may hire trades people, who happen to be A.A. members, they should be paid just like a non-A.A. pro would. It is up to each member, what they wish to donate. Members of A.A. are professionals in the recovery and medical

¹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age; pg. 145

² Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions-Tradition Eight; pg. 166
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fields. They perform their jobs as pros--not as A.A. members. And they are not professionals in A.A.—just drunks.

General Service Office in New York has provided guidelines for relating and cooperating with professionals. You can find this information at www.AA.org. Bill said, "The good is the enemy of the best." While there may be ideas about "cooperation" that sound like a good idea—it may not be the best idea.

As a long-time member of the Cooperation with the Professional Community, "CPC" committee, I have participated in gatherings where substance abuse and recovery programs were invited to attend. We share the stage with many programs who carry their own message to help albies and addicts. Sometimes they praise A.A.—sometimes they trash us. We respond to both extremes the same way—we are not professionals or spokespersons for A.A. Rather we are alcoholic members of a committee sharing our experience of what A.A. is and is not. WE do not compete with other programs—we only participate to inform you about what A.A. is and IS NOT.

Your group may choose to cooperate with professionals by allowing nursing and/or counseling students to attend your "open" meetings—very often required by their teachers. My home group has a member sit with them to answer any questions.

I had another painful experience. My sponsee and I went on a Twelve-Step call to the wife of an Alanon member who was desperate for help for his wife. After our visit—which was not her first contact with A.A., the family asked us to participate in an Intervention, led by a group of A.A. members who performed this "service" around the Bay Area. These members had double digit sobriety. We assumed they understood Tradition Eight. The Intervention proceeded. At her turn, we talked briefly about what A.A. was and was not and what us local A.A.s were willing to do as members—take her to meetings, Big Book, sponsorship, steps, etc.

We took a smoke break. Pat came back in from a smoke break and I noticed she was pissed. Teeth clenched she said, "Let's get out of here NOW!" When we got outside, she exploded. You see the "A.A." Intervention group was getting paid a large sum of money for their service. They thought of themselves as A.A. professionals, and believed they deserved to be paid.

Using A.A. membership to qualify themselves to get paid, absolutely violated Tradition Eight. But what could we do? In A.A., no one is in authority over another. My late husband liked to remind us: "We have two great disciplinarians in A.A.—great love and great pain—we need no others." Sadly, the intervention did not work—she did not want A.A. Their actions

may have destroyed any confidence the woman might have had in our program—but who knows? After all, she had paid big money to get results. This was a sad case and a painful lesson.

Whenever I go on a Twelfth-Step call, greet a newcomer or share with another alcoholic, I remind myself that this program only works for those who want it. Countless numbers of desperate alcoholics who need it—never get it. Tradition Eight reminds me that my hand of A.A. to any person who comes to us is not coming from a “professional” or an expert, but from a grateful drunk who has recovered from that “seemingly hopeless state of mind and body” through our 12-Steps. Our A.A. program is personal—one alcoholic sharing experience strength and hope with another alcoholic. It is its simplicity that makes it such a powerful message. I always try to remember what Dr. Bob said to Bill on their last visit, “...let’s keep it simple”.

Tradition Nine—*Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.*

Carole D.—Tradition Nine:

A.A. as such, must never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

The spirit of service and responsibility are the guiding principles of Tradition Nine. Service to A.A.—as a whole, to my Area, to my District, to my group and to my fellow alcoholic, be they newcomer, old-timer or anyone in between. Our service structure, the upside triangle with our groups at the top. Each layer travels down from our groups to the General Service Districts, to Areas, to Regions, to GSO and A.A. Grapevine. Our Intergroup/Central Offices serve those groups in their immediate areas. Healthy groups have group service positions and General Service & Intergroup/Central Office representatives. Many of these folks stay in service

to General Service and Intergroup/Central Office's. But their service starts in a healthy home group.

I will focus on home groups--the heartbeat of A.A. and where decisions are made. "THEY" GSO (General Service Office) cannot tell us how to run things. We have the responsibility for carrying our A.A. Message of recovery. Groups are made up of alcoholics who say they are members. Each member is responsible for passing on our message of recovery through our Steps and Traditions. One alcoholic shares their experience, strength and hope with another. Member to newcomer, sponsor to sponsee, newcomer to newcomer, one alcoholic sharing with another. While the first connection may be in a meeting—the real work for staying sober occurs between meetings—ideally with a Sponsor. Once I declare myself a member—sober or not—crazy or sane—compliant or rebellious—my shared experience may be the one thing that touches another alcoholic. This is where the ultimate responsibility rests—with me, with you, with each alcoholic who is working our program of recovery.

A group is not just a meeting. It a living breathing source of hope to the suffering alcoholic. It is the message shared that is made up of the experience of all its members no matter how long they may or may not stay sober. It is the meeting before the meeting while we set up and get ready; the meeting after the meeting while we clean up and get to know each other and the new. It connecting with each other between meetings. It is carrying our message, the Steps, the Traditions, the Concepts; giving a job to a new person; letting them know their service is vital to the group; explaining and offering sponsorship, fellowship and the sense that in our group we all are just drunks staying sober together. It is leading by example—carrying our message of recovery out of our meeting rooms so that we start living a life of dignity and purpose. That's what my home group has meant to me.

My friend, Nancy, found this wonderful quote from Dr. Bob, "... " (Quote deleted as we were not able to get permission to use it from the author of a certain book.) *sm*

During this time of COVID, we have been forced to change how we meet. In Solano County, we must sit six feet apart, wear masks, no food or beverages served and no more that 16 in a room. Thank God for Zoom, which allowed us to meet safely from our computers and phones. Healthy groups have shifted how they meet bearing in mind the responsibility for carrying the message safely and in compliance with the law.

It saddens me that some groups do not comply. In my opinion, they may be putting someone's life at risk. They declare that we can't make the

newcomer wear a mask and we can't turn him away from a meeting; we have to have coffee at A.A. meetings!

So, what **can** we do? We come to group conscience to comply with what the County allows us to do. We decided to set an example by all wearing masks; not making coffee, cleaning thoroughly. Members will be ready to give up our seats if someone needs it. We can invite the maskless newcomer to sit with some of us outside the room—sharing our experience of how we stay sober together. Recently, a long-time member was quite upset when she had walked into a live meeting expecting that all would be wearing masks. Turns out that she and one other person were the only ones with masks. She feared for herself and for others. She knows how not to drink, but how many potential alcoholics will not even get anywhere near A.A. because they fear for their health. Tradition Nine's Checklist asks, "When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?" I have to learn and relearn that it is really not all about me and what I want—it is about what sacrifice I may have to make in order to serve others who may be suffering more!

The 12 x 12 says that when we started out, most thought we were doomed. It was exclaimed that we [alkies] could not possibly police ourselves. "...They are making disobedience a virtue!", "...defiant brats!" "They won't grow up and conform to social usage." "I don't understand it—they must be nuts." Thankfully, we proved these skeptics wrong. Millions of us have become usefully whole, good citizens, responsible people, sober members of A.A. Our program is about facing and correcting our wrongs and fulfilling our commitment of personal responsibility. I must honor my group's conscience. This is so that our group not only survives, but thrives during challenging times now, and in the future.

We need to remember that our group is a vital part of a great whole. We must consider how our decisions affects others. Through unity and vigilance we can be assured that our message of recovery has depth and weight.

"I [not we] 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."

Tradition Ten—No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

Ken M.—Tradition Ten:

Tradition 10: Common welfare again! Keeping A.A. out of controversy, perception again.

Two kinds of business in A.A.! My biz, and none of my biz.

A valuable resource is the A.A. Group pamphlet!

As an A.A. member we need to check our personal opinions at the door, we all have opinions

The long form specifically list's politics, religion, alcohol reform

- Prohibition had just ended before A.A. started, still a lot of controversy, wets verses dries
- Meet in churches, we need to be careful about perception with applied affiliation. We have enough hurdles to overcome. Courts have ruled A.A. as a religion. We ought to not endorse or disparage any religion.
- Country divided, we are a microcosm of society, can't help these things filtering into A.A.
- Red hat with 4 letters
- Black t-shirt with 3 letters
- Newcomer?
- How far? Sports teams?
- Literature in meetings
- Conference approved (why?)
- Group conscience of all of A.A., can't go wrong with that, my opinion doesn't trump
- Uniform message (everywhere)
- Example (drop the rock, great book, many others)

We cannot control what others say and do, only ourselves

Language of the Heart, A.A. is Not Big Business, Nov., 1950

Our Traditions are set down on paper. But they were written first in our hearts. For each of us knows, instinctively I think, that A.A. is not ours to do with as we please. We are but caretakers to preserve the spiritual quality of our Fellowship: keep it whole for those who will come after us and have need of what has so generously been given to us.

Tradition Eleven—*Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.*

Nancy K.—Tradition Eleven:

Slide—Tradition Eleven

Tradition Eleven has a relationship to Tradition Seven.

Grapevine—November 1948: Tradition Eleven asks, in our public relations, that we be alert against sensationalism and it declares there is never need to praise ourselves. (We let our friends — the people that encounter us in their professions — recommend us.) Personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and film is urgently required, thus avoiding the pitfall of vanity, and the temptation through broken anonymity to link A.A. to other causes.

We avoid sensational advertising. Our public service announcements are simple and direct, with no “calls to action,” no celebrities, just anonymous actors or animations of personal experience.

Slide—Attraction Rather than Promotion

Bill W. often said he was one of the biggest anonymity breakers. However, in 1946 he and Dr. Bob both withdrew their names from the National Council on Alcoholism and its letterhead to avoid breaking their anonymity and the appearance of affiliation. And Marty Mann stopped publicly identifying herself as an A.A. member.

Some people believe that anonymity is horse and buggy stuff and it would be helpful to have celebrities break their anonymity to draw more people into the program. What happens if these members get drunk? What does it say about A.A.? Let’s think about it.

Slide—Anonymity

Do I sometimes promote A.A. so fanatically that I make it seem *unattractive*?

- Am I pushing it on people?

Am I always careful to keep the confidences entrusted to me as an A.A. member?

- Do I tell my own story, not yours?

Am I careful about throwing A.A. names around—even within the Fellowship?

- Do I protect the anonymity of others?

Am I reluctant to reveal my membership in Alcoholics Anonymous to a suffering alcoholic?

- Am I reaching out the hand of A.A. when a sick alcoholic wants help?

What would A.A. be like if we were not guided by the spiritual principles in Tradition Eleven?

- Where would I be without A.A.?

Am I visually and verbally attractive enough that a sick drunk would want my quality of sobriety? What about our meeting places?

- I may be the only copy of the Big Book that someone sees.

Am I careful not to identify myself or others as A.A. members when posting things on social media?

- Personally, I don't use social media because I don't want to slip up.

If my group has its own website, have we considered this Tradition when we designed it?

- What type of content does it offer?
- Are we using full names or pictures of members?

Slide—Anonymity with the Public

Forms of Anonymity: Internet

The pamphlet *Understanding Anonymity* reads, "Publicly accessible aspects of the internet such as Web sites featuring text, graphics, audio and video ought to be considered another form of 'public media'. Thus, they need to be treated in the same manner as press, radio, TV and films. This means that full names and faces should not be used." (Reprinted from *Understanding Anonymity*, page 10, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)

However, the level of anonymity in email, online meetings and chat rooms would be a personal decision.

Slide—Online Anonymity

Every time someone's name goes on a website, it spiders out to everyone that person knows, whether inside or outside the program. If that person mentions their membership in A.A., or even implies it, that breaks the anonymity of everyone on that site. This is something to consider when a member posts a photo holding up a sobriety chip or announces online how long they have been sober.

Slide—Bill W.'s Obituary

Death Notices

"A.A. members generally think it unwise to break the anonymity of a member even after his or her death, but in each situation, the final decision must rest with the family." We have no right to break the anonymity of a deceased person without the family's consent.

We publicize our principles and our work, not our individual members. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us. Ambition has no place in A.A. Each member is an active guardian of our fellowship."

Tradition Twelve—*And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.*

Nancy K.—Tradition Twelve:

Slide—Tradition Twelve

Originally Tradition Twelve read principles *above* personalities and was changed in 1949 to *before*. Alanon uses *above*.

- Traditions 1-11 are for the protection of the group.
- Tradition 12 is for the protection of the individual.

Slide—Grapevine

Grapevine—November 1948: The Recovery Steps would make each individual A.A. whole and one with God; the Twelve Points of Tradition would make us one with each other and whole with the world about us. Unity is our aim.

Slide—Principles of Tradition Twelve

Common Welfare—Unity

- The common welfare of all A.A. members comes before individual welfare.
- We are part of a whole and it takes all of us to make our Fellowship work.
- What would happen to *me* if A.A. as a whole disappeared?

Trusted Servants

- Our trusted servants do not rule us, they only serve.
- Rotation of leadership ensures that no one owns a position, and everyone gets an opportunity to serve.

Membership Requirements

- Any alcoholic is welcome no matter what other problems they may have or how they look, smell, or act.
- The 1987 A.A. Primary Purpose Card reads...In keeping with our singleness of purpose and our Third Tradition which states that "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking," we ask that all who participate confine their discussion to their problems with alcohol.

Autonomy

- Each group may have its own format, traditions and customs as long as they don't affect A.A. as a whole.
- I can't expect an A.A. group to conform to my standards just because this is how they did it where I got sober.

Primary Purpose

- Shoemaker stick to thy last! It's better to do one thing supremely well than many badly.

- Our focus is on the alcoholic who still suffers, not others who only identify with a myriad of other ailments or issues they may have.
- We don't get involved with or endorse any outside enterprises or causes.

Non-Affiliation

- A.A. does not affiliate with outside enterprises.
- Members may work with outside ventures as individuals.
- We adhere to our primary purpose.

Self Supporting

- We support A.A. financially as well as physically by our service.
- Consider giving an anonymous Grapevine subscription.
- We support our groups, Districts, Areas, and General Service Office.

Non-Professional

- We do service work for fun and for free.
The rewards are our own sobriety.
- This is a program of attraction—not promotion.

Spirit of Service

- The aim of each A.A. member is personal sobriety.
- The aim of our services is to bring sobriety within reach of all who want it.

Outside Issues

- Outside issues or controversies have no place in our meeting rooms.
- That includes what we say and what we wear.
- Bill W. implored us to see what we could give to a meeting, not what we can get out of it.

Attraction Rather than Promotion

- Anonymity means unacknowledged or unknown.
- We have no big shots in A.A.
- Every A.A. member's name must be confidential if he or she wishes.
- Be watchful of breaking anonymity on social media.

Principles before Personalities

- What happens if someone breaks their anonymity publicly and then

gets drunk? What does that say about Alcoholics Anonymous?

- It's what is said that's important, not who said it.

Slide—Traditions Checklist

The questions and statements used in this presentation came from the Traditions Checklist published by The A.A. Grapevine. Bill W. said, "May Alcoholics Anonymous serve God in happy unison for so long as He may need us."

Slide—Spiritual Principle of Anonymity

Thank you very much for joining us today. Thank you, Sarah, for putting this workshop together. May you all apply these Traditions in your personal life as well as in your A.A. life.

Slide—Unity Declaration

Please join me in saying the Unity Declaration: This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

Slide—Conference Approved Resources

REFERENCES FROM Nancy K.

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- Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers
- Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- Our Great Responsibility
- Pass It On
- Twelve Traditions Illustrated
- Understanding Anonymity
- Anonymity is so fragile you can break it with one finger

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REFERENCES FROM Lorraine MacD.
The A.A. Group where it all begins pamphlet
The 12 Traditions Illustrated pamphlet
A.A. Comes of Age book
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book
Grapevine 12 Traditions Checklist
and personal experiences

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

Traditions Checklist - from the A.A. Grapevine (updated November 2018)

Service Material from the General Service Office

*These questions * were originally published in the Grapevine in conjunction with a series of articles on the Twelve Traditions that ran from November 1969 to September 1971. While they were originally intended as suggestions for individual use, many A.A. groups have since adopted them and used them as a basis for wider discussion.*

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person? Am I sometimes divisive? Do I ever gossip or take another member's inventory?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I foster arguments with statements such as "just for the sake of discussion"?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I sometimes abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive A.A. remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting A.A. in one place with A.A. in another?
5. Do I ever put down some A.A. activities for not participating in this or that aspect of A.A.?
6. Am I informed about A.A. as a whole? Do I support A.A. as a whole in every way I can, or just the parts that I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of A.A. members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?

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, A.A. committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with A.A. Twelfth Step jobs or other A.A. responsibilities?
3. Do I look for credit in my A.A. jobs, praise for my A.A. ideas?
4. Do I often feel the need to "save face" in group discussions, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work along with it?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn with A.A. chores?
6. Do I complain about the decisions that my group makes, even though I do not attend the business meetings where these decisions are made?

Tradition Three: The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new A.A. members as those who likely will not make it?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately or publicly do not want in my A.A. group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or not?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, sexual identity or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I over impressed by a celebrity, a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at A.A. needing information or help (even if he can't ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what they do for a living? Where they live? What their domestic arrangements are? Whether they have been to A.A. before? What their other problems are?

Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in A.A.?
2. Does my group consider the welfare of nearby groups in its actions and decisions? Of A.A. "as a whole"?
3. Do I judge or criticize other members' behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in A.A., I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths—their lengths, not mine—to stay sober?
6. Do I ever criticize certain groups because I think they don't do things how I believe A.A. should be done?

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

1. Am I willing to firmly explain to newcomers the limitations of A.A. help, even though they get mad at me for not giving them a loan? Or dating advice? Or help with a job?
2. Have I ever imposed on any A.A. member for a special favor or consideration simply because I am a fellow alcoholic?
3. Am I willing to Twelfth-step the next newcomer without regard to who or what is in it for me?
4. Do I help my group in every way to fulfill our primary purpose?
5. Do I remember that A.A. long-timers, too, can be alcoholics who still suffer? Do I try both to help them and to learn from them?
6. Does our group ever use money from the basket for dinners or events or for memorials for members who have passed on?

Tradition Six: An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

1. Why is it important that we not get involved in outside enterprises?
2. Is it ever wise for a group to lease a small building or endorse an outside event?
3. Are all the officers and members of our local clubhouse familiar with A.A. Guidelines on the relationship between A.A. and clubs, which is available free from GSO?
4. Should the secretary of our group serve on the mayor's advisory committee on alcoholism?
5. Our group's landlord is raising money to pay for a new roof on the building. Should the group make a contribution? What if the landlord specifically asks the group to make a contribution?

Tradition Seven: Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help A.A. (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new person who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when drunk in a barroom?
2. How do I (or my group) support our International Journals of Alcoholics Anonymous, Grapevine and LaVina?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be OK to let the government subsidize A.A. groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important for a group to get a big A.A. collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant A.A. business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
6. Does my group have a "prudent reserve"? If yes, do I know what that amount is?
7. If a family member, work colleague or close friend who is not an A.A. member wants to make a financial contribution to my group, should the group accept it? What if my group is short on funds?

Tradition Eight: Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

1. Does my own behavior accurately mirror the Traditions? If not, what needs changing?
2. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?

3. Do I sometimes try to get some reward—even if not money—for my personal A.A. efforts?
4. Do I try to sound in A.A. like an expert on alcoholism? On recovery? On medicine? On sociology? On A.A. itself? On psychology? On spiritual matters? Or, heaven help me, even on humility?
5. Do I make an effort to understand what A.A. employees do? What workers in other alcoholism agencies do? Can I distinguish clearly among them?
6. Do I know where my local meeting directory comes from?
7. In my own A.A. life, have I any experiences which illustrate the wisdom of this Tradition?
8. Have I read the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*? How about the pamphlet "A.A.. Tradition -How It Developed".
9. Can my group rely on me to fulfill my service responsibilities without someone checking on me?

Tradition Nine: A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

1. Do I try to "boss" things in A.A.?
2. Do I ever resist formal aspects of A.A. because I see them as authoritative?
3. Do I try to understand and use all elements of the A.A. program - even if no one makes me do so - with a sense of personal responsibility?
4. Do I exercise patience and humility in any A.A. job I take?
5. Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any A.A. job?
6. Why doesn't every A.A. group need a constitution and bylaws?
7. Have I learned to step out of an A.A. job gracefully—and profit thereby—when the time comes?
8. What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility?

Tradition Ten: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

1. Do I ever give the impression that there really is an "A.A. opinion" on doctors? Psychiatrists? Churches? Hospitals? Jails? Alcohol? Prescribed medications? Other drugs? Other 12-Step programs? Vitamins? Al-Anon? The federal or state government?
2. Can I honestly share my own personal experience concerning any of those without giving the impression I'm stating the "A.A. opinion"?
3. What in A.A. history gave rise to our Tenth Tradition?
4. What would A.A. be without this Tradition? Where would I be?
5. Do I breach this or any of its supporting Traditions in subtle, perhaps unconscious, ways?

6. How can I manifest the spirit of this Tradition in my personal life outside A.A.? Inside A.A.?
7. Should the meeting secretary intervene to remind A.A. members about this Tradition if a member starts criticizing one political party compared to others or favoring a religion over others?

Tradition Eleven: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

1. Do I sometimes promote A.A. so fanatically that I make it seem unattractive?
2. Am I always careful to keep the confidences shared with me as an A.A. member?
3. Am I careful about throwing A.A. members' names around—even within the Fellowship?
4. Am I ashamed of being a recovered, or recovering, alcoholic?
5. What would A.A. be like if we were not guided by the ideas in Tradition Eleven? Where would I be?
6. Am I careful not to identify myself or others as members of A.A. when I post certain things on social media.
7. Is my A.A. sobriety attractive enough that a sick drunk would want such a quality for himself?
8. If my group has its own website, have we considered this Tradition when we designed it, how accessible it is, and the type of content that it offers?

Tradition Twelve: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

1. Why is it a good idea for me to place the common welfare of all A.A. members before individual welfare? What would happen to me if A.A. as a whole disappeared?
2. When I do not trust or agree with A.A.'s current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?
3. In my opinions of and remarks about other A.A.s, do I imply that membership requirements go beyond the desire to stay sober?
4. Have I a personal responsibility to help an A.A. group fulfill its primary purpose? What is my part?
5. Do I do all I can do to support A.A. financially?
6. Should I keep my A.A. membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help another alcoholic (and therefore me)? Is my brand of A.A. so attractive that other drunks might want it?
7. What does anonymity mean to me?
8. In light of increased awareness of alcoholism and A.A.'s program of recovery among the general public, why is the principle of anonymity still important?

9. Am I mindful to respect the anonymity of other A.A. members who may work in my place of employment or my industry? How about A.A. members who live in my area or neighborhood?
10. What does "principles before personalities" mean to me?

Letter spoken about in Tradition Three regarding the Irma Livoni story.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Post Office Box 607

Hollywood Station,
Hollywood, California

December Fifth, 1941

Irma Livoni
939 S. Gramercy Place
Los Angeles, California

Dear Mrs. Livoni :

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Los Angeles Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, held Dec. 4th, 1941, it was decided that your attendance at group meetings was no longer desired until certain explanations and plans for the future were made to the satisfaction of this committee. This action has been taken for reasons which should be most apparent to yourself.

It was decided that, should you so desire, you may appear before members of this committee and state your attitude. This opportunity will be afforded you between now and December 15th, 1941. You may communicate with us at the above address by that date. In case you do not wish to appear, we shall consider the matter closed and that your membership is terminated.

Los Angeles Group

Mortimer Joseph, Frank Randall, Edmund Jussen, Jr.,
Fay D. Loomis, Al Marineau

Service Material from the General Service Office

CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE

“Conference-approved”—What It Means to You

The term “Conference-approved” describes written or audiovisual material approved by the Conference for publication by G.S.O. This process assures that everything in such literature is in accord with A.A. principles.

Conference-approved material always deals with the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous or with information about the A.A. Fellowship.

The term has no relation to material not published by G.S.O. It does *not* imply Conference disapproval of other material about A.A. A great deal of literature helpful to alcoholics is published by others, and A.A. does not try to tell any individual member what he or she may or may not read.

Conference approval assures us that a piece of literature represents solid A.A. experience. Any Conference-approved booklet or pamphlet goes through a lengthy and painstaking process, during which a variety of A.A.s from all over the United States and Canada read and express opinions at every stage of production.

How to Tell What Is and What Is Not Conference-Approved

Look for the statement on books, pamphlets and audiovisual materials: “This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature”

Not All “A.A. Literature” Is Conference-Approved

Central offices and intergroups do write and distribute pamphlets or booklets that are not Conference-approved. If such pieces meet the needs of the local membership, they may be legitimately classified as “A.A. literature.” There is no conflict between A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S. – publishers of Conference-approved literature), and central offices or intergroups – rather they complement each other. The Conference does not *disapprove* of such material. G.S.O. does develop some literature that does not have to be approved by the Conference, such as Service Material, Guidelines and bulletins.

Available at Most A.A. Groups

Most local A.A. groups purchase and display a representative sampling of Conference-approved pamphlets, and usually carry a supply of hardcover books. Conference-approved literature may be available at central offices and intergroups, or it may be ordered directly from G.S.O. Groups normally offer pamphlets free of charge, and the books at cost.

Grapevine and Conference Approval

An often asked question is whether or not Grapevine magazine is "Conference-approved." General Service Conference approval is a lengthy review process that can take years for longer projects, with several stages of committee evaluation along the way. Since Grapevine comes out 12 times a year, and the Conference meets only once a year, the magazine would never come off the press if it had to go through the Conference review process. However, the Conference has always supported the concept of Grapevine and, in 1986, a Conference Advisory Action specifically addressed the issue of Conference approval for the first time with the following statement: "Since each issue of (the) Grapevine cannot go through the Conference approval process, the Conference recognizes (the) Grapevine as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous." By extension La Viña is recognized in the same way.

In addition, the Conference Charter guarantees the right of Grapevine's editor to accept or reject material for publication; there is a Conference Committee on Grapevine, formed in 1954; and any Grapevine or La Viña matter of importance to the Fellowship as a whole is brought to the Conference through that committee. So, the concept of Grapevine has been endorsed by the Conference as a whole and the use of Grapevine and its publications as recovery tools has been encouraged throughout the Fellowship year after year.

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Rev.

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