

LIFE LINES

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THE HITCH-HIKER

"You provide everything, I'll go along for the ride."

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With this thumb, a hitch-hiker says, "You furnish the gas, your furnish the car, attend to the repairs and the upkeep, supply the insurance, and I'll take a ride with you. But, don't forget, if you have an accident, I'll sue you for damages." Sounds pretty one-sided, doesn't it?

This brings up the thought of the hitch-hikers that seem to be found in many AA groups. They seem to say, "You furnish the meeting place, pay for the rent for the meeting room or the building, make sure the light bills are paid, and the coffee pot is full. Have meetings regularly, with special programs and speakers from time to time, keep the place clean and the sidewalks shoveled in the winter, and the grass neatly mowed in the summer. You do all of these things, and I'll go along for the ride. And if things don't suit us we will complain, criticize, and probably hitch-hike to another group. Worse yet, we may say that your 'thing' doesn't work and we'll hitch-hike back to the nearest bar."

These people are really cheating themselves, and our fellowship is the poorer because of their lack of genuine commitment.

We must get involved to get the most out of any group that we join, and by the same token, we must get involved in order to give as much as we are able to the group. The newcomer may feel hesitant to push himself forward at first but push himself or herself they must, to get moving in sobriety.

It can start so simply, being a good active member of his own individual group... help get the meeting room ready, help clean it up after the meeting by emptying ash trays and washing coffee cups, talking to newcomers after the meeting, etc. All those jobs have to be done, and they can be the beginning of our service to the fellowship. Once the newcomer starts doing these things, he is going to get a feeling of "belonging." He will have one more reason to stick it out with the group those first tough weeks, rather than drift away.

Once we have the feeling that we belong to the group, our real meaningful service can begin. Involvement will make this happen. We heard early in our first AA meetings that "in order to keep it, you have to give it away." It is when we start "carrying the message" in some manner, when we start

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS CENTRAL OFFICE

HOURS

Weekdays	8:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M.
Saturdays	9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
Sundays & Holidays	10:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

2712 S. Grand Avenue
Santa Ana, CA 92705
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From San Clemente, Dana Point, Laguna
Beach & Capistrano Valley Areas -
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THE RISE AND FALL OF A HOME GROUP

Once upon a time there was a home group of Alcoholics Anonymous. It was "once upon a time" because this group no longer exists. It folded one day after many, many years of serving the alcoholics in its community. Why?

When I first discovered this meeting, I found it to be a very healthy group of Alcoholics Anonymous. There were many old-timers to be seen talking with new people, there were greeters at the door, a secretary, treasurer, and a GSR all discussing group business. New people were welcomed with a cup of coffee and a handshake. The group just beamed with happy people.

A large crowd each week caused many tables to be filled and seats were hard to come by. The last Tuesday of each month the group broke down into smaller groups for table discussion meetings. The rest of the meetings each week were closed speaker/discussion meetings and again seats were hard to come by and getting there early was common knowledge.

Coffee was always ready for the first early person to arrive and there was always fellowship after the meeting. Sound good? Maybe this is *your* home group?

One meeting, after a group conscience discussion, a woman was offered the responsibility of GSR. She got the job after discussion about whether she would be good for the group.

She started attending area assemblies and GSR workshops to learn about the Traditions and how they helped groups stick to their primary purpose. She learned about Conference-approved literature and how it shouldn't be mixed in with other literature to confuse the new people about which is AA's and which is not.

She also learned about money in the Fellowship, the 60-30-10 and other plans, and not using basket money to buy outside literature. This was exciting to me to watch this group becoming informed on issues that affected it as one group within the larger AA.

But then, slowly, the group's customs and practices began to erode. At one group business meeting, the GSR pointed out that

the literature the group literature representative had purchased was not Conference-approved literature and was purchased with money intended for AA use. This business meeting ended with the literature representative throwing the outside literature order forms at the group and leaving.

Later at another business meeting, discussion was held on whether an interpreter for the hearing impaired could be allowed to attend a closed meeting. The group conscience decided against it, since it was a closed meeting. An old-timer, in disagreement, took the matter before the people attending that night's meeting, whether they were members of that group or not. The people attending voted to reverse the decision of the group conscience by opening

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"...the force which will destroy Alcoholics Anonymous will come from inside the Fellowship."

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the meeting to anyone. That "meeting" conscience weakened the effectiveness of that "group" conscience, and more people left the group.

This group was so well-attended that the church adjusted the rent accordingly, but money was always there because of the number of people who attended the meetings. The group became so effective in carrying the message that a local alcoholism referral agency began sending its new young people to the Tuesday meeting as an introduction to AA. This drew other young people to the meeting and eventually it began to be known as a great place for young people to meet.

Within a year after this flood of young people, a local center for troubled children also began sending some of its clients to the meeting. By this time some of the old-timers had found other Tuesday meetings to attend. When asked why, they said, "We are

not hearing the language of AA that we need to stay sober." Others thought the real reasons might be age differences, dress, language of the street, and just plain being outnumbered young to old.

A powerful principle in AA, rotation – the pass-it-on to the newer people – was needed in order for the group to grow. This time there was no discussion about who would be best for the group or who was sober, but rather anyone who would volunteer got the responsibilities. Secretary, treasurer, and GSR were passed on to people who didn't know the first thing about the principles of AA or anything of the Traditions in action.

Once a chairman offered the Traditions for a discussion topic and they were turned into feelings, drug talk, Freudian concepts, and rehab language. He never came back and neither did the former officers of the group. The group had become a group of the blind leading the blind.

Group conscience began discussing the topics of – how do we get older people to return? How are we going to pay this high rent? What are we going to do?

A local DCM was asked to attend a group conscience meeting to listen and offer some suggestions. They talked about the Traditions, Steps, outside literature, getting sober people to chair the meetings, turning radios off, and the quality of sobriety that action in AA offers.

A plea went out to the elder members to please return to the meetings. A few did return, but only for a short time. These kids seemed to be left on their own. A new group conscience emerged, struggled for a short time and failed again when volunteers were needed to fill the frequently vacated group responsibilities. Again, there was no leadership from the now "younger old-timers" as they too had left for other groups. Finally, with the rent too much, no coffee, and no unity, "A Home Group" met last week to announce the end.

Bill W. said that the force which will destroy Alcoholics Anonymous will come very slowly from inside the Fellowship. This

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AA BIRTHDAYS

Birthday Donations...

Many AA members celebrate their AA birthdays by sending a donation to Central Office. These donations help keep the doors of Central Office open, so that new members may get the same help so many of us have received. Some members send one or two dollars for each year of sobriety. Others make a personal donation monthly or on a quarterly basis. This month we'd like to extend thanks to:

Happy Birthday!

Sandy B.	Dana Point	6 years
Robb E.	Corona Del Mar	8 years
Ralph M.	Costa Mesa	14 years
Mary Ann M.	Huntington Beach	17 years
Dick B.	Costa Mesa	18 years



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Tradition of the Month

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 money, property and authority.

Ask Yourself...

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 guy who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when I was tanked in a barroom?
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize A.A. groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important 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 business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

—Reprinted from the AA Grapevine Traditions Checklist



Conference Advisory Actions

1. A new pocket edition of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* was approved.
2. The first 164 pages of the *Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Preface, the Forwards, "The Doctor's Opinion," "Dr. Bob's Nightmare" and the Appendices shall remain as is, unchanged.
3. A Fourth Edition should not be published at this time.
4. The draft pamphlet, "Self-Support – Where Money and Spirituality Mix," be accepted, placing emphasis on the informed group conscience; that a heading in this pamphlet, titled "Suggested Plans for Group Contributions Toward All A.A. Services," give five suggested contribution plans.
5. A bi-monthly Spanish edition of the *Grapevine* was approved on a trial basis (up to five years), and the Spanish articles are to be deleted from the regular *Grapevine* issues.
6. The soft-cover "Cooperation with the Professional Community" (CPC) workbook will be available as a single item, as well as in a simple binder labeled "CPC Kit", which will contain other related items suggested by the Trustee C.P.C. Committee.
7. The Anonymity Statement Card used at public meetings was revised to include anonymity reminders regarding video and audio taping.
8. Various changes and additions will be made in the *A.A. Service Manual*.
9. The theme for the 1996 Conference will be "Preserving Our Fellowship – Our Challenge".

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WELCOME HOME!

I am panicking because I just can't remember where I put the key! It seems so long ago that I left. Crying, I finally give up the search, and in desperation I climb the One Step to the door. Amazingly, I realize for the first time, that it has already been unlocked for me.

The door opens slowly. A thin shaft of light spreads across the wooden floor. A small ray of hope. I come to believe, "I remember this place," and a soft smile of relief crosses my face. A little silver-grey dust covers the floor—no one has lived here for quite some time. I take a Second Step, following me through the door is a puff of fresh air. It seems to chase out some musty regrets I had for my leaving, and fans the pages of an abandoned book that seem to whisper, "we missed you ... we missed you."

I smell something cooking, something really delicious. I decided to take a Third Step into the kitchen and slowly realize that supper was left on for me a long, long time ago. Surely ... no ... it couldn't possible be. But it's not spoiled, it's not burnt, it's just precisely ready. My place at the table has been set and I suddenly discover my hunger, long lost before now. In fact, I'm famished. But when I have devoured what was prepared, I have the strangest sense of complete satisfaction—as if I finally understand what "enough" is all about.

I take a Fourth Step to the bed I made. And now I must lie in it... fearless, no matter how hard it may be. Surprisingly, I lay down in the soft grace of surrendering my darkest secrets.

I kick down the covers with a firm Fifth Step and by the Sixth Step I realize that I no longer need them to hide myself beneath. Humbly, upon Step Seven, I ask that they be removed.

Rising now, I take an Eighth Step to the closet. I'm not surprised by what is in my old closet... in fact, I know each skeleton by name. One by one I face them in a Ninth Step, make amends to them, and let them go free. When my closet is clean, I make a test-run and find it is exactly Ten Steps from my front door to my closet. With the Tenth Step, my closet can be cleaned-out every day.

I have lived here quite some time now, but I have never really noticed that little door, there under the stairway. Now that I am looking, I notice it's a crawlspace. I open the door and go in on my knees ... and inside, I discover the Eleventh Step.

Crawling out from under the stairs, I feel I have just awakened. Bright sunlight is coming in through the window, and outside, across the yard, I can see my neighbor's house. It's been vacant for quite awhile, I guess, because the lawn is overgrown with weeds and it looks dark inside. It is only Twelve Steps to my neighbor's porch. I unlock the door for him... just in case by the time he gets here he can't remember where he put the key.

G.G., Tennessee

Reprinted from the Internet (SoberSpace)



UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR AA

The events listed below are for your information only. If you have any questions regarding any event, we suggest that you contact the organization conducting the event.

July 21st - 23rd, 1995

10th Annual "Serenity in the Pines"
 Prescott Shoestring Roundup
 Emmanuel Pines Camp
 5095 Iron Springs Road
 Prescott, AZ
 Information: (520) 772-5138

July 21st-23rd, 1995

1995 Summerfest
 Eugene Hilton Hotel & City Conf
 Center
 Eugene, Oregon
 (503) 341-0772

August 25th-27th, 1995

New Mexico's Conference of Young
 People in A.A. (NMCYPAA)
 Ramada Inn, Hotel Circle Road
 Albuquerque, New Mexico
 Kim (505) 246-0786/John (505) 244-9634

July 16th, 1995

1995 Planning Meeting for the
 44th Annual Southern Calif Convention
 Buena Park Community Center
 8150 Knott Avenue
 10:00 AM to Noon

July 28th-30th, 1995

3rd Annual Foothill AA Roundup
 Occidental College, 1600 Campus Rd.
 Los Angeles, CA
 Info: P.O. Box 184,
 Montrose, CA 91021

September 8th-10th, 1995

End of Summer Fling
 "Spiritually Speaking"
 Walnut Creek Marriott
 2355 N. Main St., Walnut Creek, CA
 For information call (916) 538-8917,
 (510) 376-1641 or (510) 682-3455

August 13th, 1995

Orange County Intergroup
 Annual Picnic
 10:00 am to ??
 Mile Square Park, Space 17
 Fountain Valley

FRANK & ERNEST



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