

This Is What I Think About It!



Bob S.

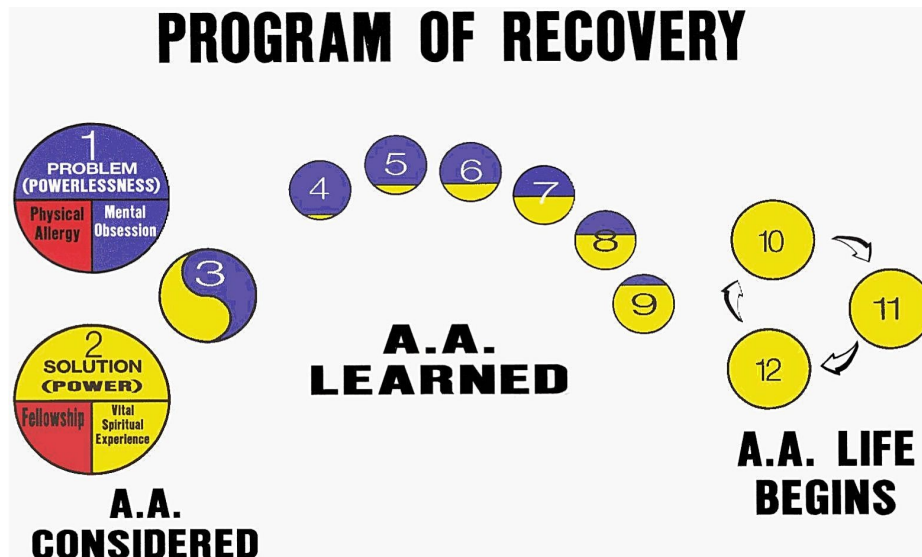
Dear AA Friends,

Here follows recovery articles published by yours truly in various AA Intergroup newsletters and posted with the online Fourth Dimension 12-Step Study Group. This book is in progressive construction, if you will – an accumulative record for future reference. These articles are in no particular order.

It is my hope that you will find, in these writings, both enjoyment and helpful knowledge as we trudge the road of happy destiny. . . . And that perhaps be inspired to do some writing of your own.

Bob S. (DOS 8/15/1975)
May, 2012

P.S. This chart illustrates how the Twelve Steps come together in an easily understandable whole.



A Brief History of the Fourth Dimension AA Group

The idea of our group originated in year 1985 in Palm Beach, Florida, with a group of the same name which was started by a professional athlete, Del Heckendorf (now deceased). This group placed emphasis on sponsoring newcomers through all 12 Steps in one 12-15 hour sitting. Despite local skepticism, this small group grew rapidly. Bob S. learned much from this group, then moved to West Los Angeles, CA. in 1987 and began taking newcomers through the steps in the same timely manner as in Florida. This new and unusual group taught newcomers in their homes at first, but in April of 1987 a regular 12-Step 'Joe & Charlie' tape/discussion meeting was started in Santa Monica, CA, at Memorial Park, 14th & Olympic Blvd. Shortly thereafter the recordings were abandoned and the chairperson led the study directly from the Big Book. This group is still meeting twenty-five years later, but under a different name. (Big Book Comes Alive, 6:00 pm, Sundays. Soon new 4D Meetings were started in Culver City, West Hollywood, West Los Angeles and at the Clare Foundation in Santa Monica. These were all 90-minute meetings.

Our motive has never been to dictate a particular method of sobriety, but to encourage AA members to study the Big Book and decide for themselves. Somebody said, "Read, then do!"

Bob and Deanna S., moved to Richmond, Indiana, in May of 1989, where they started a meeting of the same ilk. "We would present the 12-Steps every Tuesday evening in thirteen week sessions (Four times a year). These meetings allowed *no* experience, strength and hope and asked that all opinions be expressed only *after* the meeting. Questions were accepted only for the current step or lesson we were studying that particular evening. It is easily understood why our 90-minute meetings were less than popular with the mainstream fellowship, but this 'teaching' method *did* appeal to a certain small segment.

Traveling 12-Step seminars attracted curious visitors members from nearby cities, especially nearby Dayton Ohio. Bob S. explains: "In 1996, Ron P. helped us start the first Fourth Dimension 12-Step Study Group in Dayton, Ohio, which, in finality, went over like gangbusters! This marked the beginning of many new meetings over the following years. We have since spawned six other 4D style meetings in the Dayton area, and others in Springfield, Wilmington, Xenia, Middletown, Springboro, Cincinnati and Troy, Ohio. Muncie and Indianapolis, Indiana; Maysville, KY; Charleston, IL; Ocala, Fl; Queens, NYC and Liverpool, UK. Another meeting was started by Lars, in Soderhamn, Sweden, but is no longer existent. All these wonderful groups owe their existence to Del Heckendorf's seemingly radical meeting 1985 Fourth Dimension Group in Palm Beach, Florida. Thank you Del! Thank you God!

Not all the above groups are tagged as Fourth Dimension Groups, but most use our large ***Program Of Recovery*** chart and our many meeting handouts. These items can be viewed at www.4dgroups.org. This terrific 'informational' website was created by Mike S., from Middletown, OH.

Jerry O., started an online Fourth Dimension Big Book Study Group in 2002 which has grown to over 360 members. To view, go to <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Indyfourthdimension> Here is a description of this group: The Indy Fourth Dimension group is a fellowship of alcoholics who focus on the spiritual program of action outlined as a program of recovery in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. We believe, as did the AA pioneers, that we do recover from alcoholism by following the exact, precise, clear-cut directions laid out in the Big Book. We launch into this program of action immediately, and disdain many of the contemporary approaches that promote a slow, easy does it approach to recovery.

Our group[s] have presented over one-hundred 12 Step and AA History Seminars over these years. If your Home Group, District or Area are interested, please contact Bob S.: (765) 935-0130 or rstonebraker212@comcast.net. Of course, there is no charge. ~~~ Thanks for your interest.

Step Two: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.


Came to believe!



Poor ole Caveman Zot! Even with the most profound evidence, he cannot become willing to believe; he still needs to theorize.

Fresh out of the bars, I could hardly believe in my shadow, let alone something I couldn't even see. But luckily, I was informed that I didn't actually have to believe; I simply had to become **willing** to believe (pp 46 & 47). As soon as few marbles began twirling the same direction in my noggin, my choice became quite obvious, I could choose to believe and have a good chance for sobriety, or choose to disbelieve and doubtless end up with the DTs one more time. What a seemingly easy choice! My heart said yes, **let's go for it!** So I did all those things AA said to do, but yet my stubborn head continued to come up new bright ideas. Dangerous ideas! But, happily, the AA program of action was more powerful than my good-keen-intellectual-alcoholic-mind.

Yet, there were times when I could faintly hear that song from **Porgy and Bess**: “*It ain't nec-*

essarily so.”  Now that voice is the very same voice that I followed into the bar room time after time. Later on in AA, I learned that Bill Wilson explained it as a Mental Obsession. In retrospect, I can now see that my debating mind would cause me to get soused up, but my **willing to believe** heart would allow me to remain sober. Thank God I listened to my heart because, in finality, my **willingness to believe** overcame my dangerous mind. I have come to believe that AA is a program of the heart, rather than of the mind.

In William James' writing on “pragmatic rationality,” he stated: “Under certain conditions, it is both right and reasonable for us to choose beliefs that promote our interests.” In other words if it is beneficial for you: **go for it!**

I like the story about Fitz Mayo (pp 56 & 57) where he seemingly could not drink even if he would. And this was simply because he was “**willing to believe.**” So, it doesn't matter what my mind thinks so long as my actions spring from my **willing to believe** heart. Someone said, “When I decided against arriving at a **conclusion of the mind**, and instead, made a **decision of the heart**, the loud static of uncertainty sank to a whisper. My *static*” stopped many years ago, and; God has protected me from that first drink since my very first AA meeting. My heart still sings: **I believe! I believe!**

The “Four Absolutes” Are Surreptitiously Embedded In Step Four

Quote from “*The Four Absolutes*” (A pamphlet from Cleveland Ohio): “Many who have lost the precious gift of sobriety would ascribe it to carelessness in seeking these objectives. If you will revisit the Twelve Steps with care, you will find the Four Absolutes form a thread which is discernible in a sober life of quality, every step of the glorious journey. The Absolutes are: “Honesty, Unselfishness, Love and Purity”

But, on the other hand, Richmond Walker, author of, “**Twenty-Four Hours a Day**,” wrote this: “Bill Wilson did not like this list at all, and said bluntly that “alcoholics do not do well with absolutes.” In fact, it can all too easily produce a return to the kind of moral-ism and legalism which drives alcoholics to despair.”

Conversely, there are two obvious dangers of the word, ‘*absolute*.’

An egocentric alcoholic brags to himself how perfectly (*absolutely*) that he is doing AA.

More likely, the idea of ‘*absolute*’ is so overwhelming that the alcoholic doesn’t even try.

Research reveals that the phrase ‘*Four Standards*’ preceded the phrase ‘*Four Absolutes*.’ Most Cleveland AA members were fine with the *absolute* idea, but not everywhere else. Those early AA members who rejected the latter phrase, might have accepted the more user-friendly title of ‘**Standards!**’ Nevertheless, the essential ingredients of honesty, unselfishness, love and purity are easily found in the essence of Step Four:

Honesty: “. . . They, like ourselves, were sick too.” (p. 67 – top) “We looked for our own mistakes” (p. 67).

Unselfishness: “Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?” (p. 69)

Love: “We throw ourselves into helping others.” (p. 70).

Purity: “We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance and strength to do the right thing.” (p. 70)

Yes! The ‘**Absolutes**’ are imbedded into Step Four: **absolutely!**

Step Three Promises

I am not sure about other places, but where I live it is general practice to read the *9th Step Promises* during the “commercials” ad nauseam at most every meeting. Where/when I got sober these were seldom, if ever, read at meetings, but have now become AA custom. Okay, there is nothing wrong with this, but don't you think there are other promises of equal or even higher value? Let's consider the 3rd Step Promises:

Page 63: *“When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.”*

“We had a new Employer.” I notice the ‘E’ of Employer is capitalized; by studying the Big Book I know this is one method Bill utilizes to designate God. Well, that is certainly good news! My last employer (That was me!) got me drunk and fired from my job-job, over and again.

“Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.”

Uh-oh! There is a catch here! I am not going to get what I needed by staying home and watching slip-a-vision. *Performed His work well??* Oh! I see! Page 77 tells me, *“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”* I guess I'd better forget “Wheel of Fortune” tonight, and get to a meeting!

“More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life.” This resonates with Bill Wilson's spiritual mentor, Rev Sam Shoemaker, said about the essence of the AA program: *“Out of self, into God, into others.”*

“As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter.” Wow! Me too!

“We were reborn.” How can I do that? My sponsor says, “by continuing with Steps 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9, so you can live in the spirit of Steps 10, 11 & 12. – Dummy!

Momentum Is important

The A, B, Cs implied that ‘I can’t,’ but ‘God can.’ Being convinced of this I desperately prayed for God’s assistance in Step Three. In so doing I had asked to be relieved from the bondage of self, *whatever that was!* But what was it? Well, the sooner I found out, the better my chances for sobriety! The Big Book provides a timetable to illustrate the importance that I discover what had been blocking me from God’s help, and find out el-pronto!



*“Next we **launched** out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless **at once** followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.” (P. 63 – 64)*

The word ‘**launched**’ doesn’t sound like hitching up the horse and buggy, but more like kerooming off in a rocket ship. . . . And we are instructed to do this ‘**at once,**’ or our Third Step Prayer will have little permanent effect! Now this I can readily understand. When my home team wins or loses our football game I often embroider feelings of tremendous joy or despair, but two weeks later barely a tinge of that previous emotion or even memory remains.

If momentum is of essential importance, then timing is of essential importance! Luckily, for me, my sponsor, Carl, started me on the Step Four process within just minutes after praying the Third Step Prayer – with deep emotion, I might add. Consequently, just as the Big Book says, I had a **great effect!** Momentum! Now, years later, I still maintain the **great effect!!** It is as though I prayed the Step Three Prayer with Carl just yesterday.

The Big Book directions indicate timing, which perpetuates sufficient momentum to fully benefit from the Step Process, e.g.: Step Four, **at once**; Step Five, **at first opportunity**; after a period of reflection, Step Six is “**then,**” (**not later**); Step Seven, **when ready**, Step Eight is already done (***We did it when we took inventory*** - p. 76); and Step Nine begins **now**, but may take months or years to complete the list. Steps 10, 11 & 12 begin as soon as the Seventh Step prayer is finished. (See page 84 and read “. . . set right new mistakes **as** we go along.”) It doesn’t say **after** Step Nine amends are completed. Please note the many timing/momentum suggestions of the Maintenance Steps.

I thank God for a sponsor who knew the importance of momentum!

The Step Five Promises Are Real

The Fifth Step Promises are on page 75:

"Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted." Yes, what a relief to get so many hidden secrets off my chest! Confession is good for the soul, but more profound when done with a sponsor and God, rather than with my favorite bartender . . . and this time I remembered what I said! ***"Our fears fall from us."*** Once it's out, it's out! What's to worry? What? Me worry?



What? Me worry?

No more! "If you freely admit your faults, you deprive your friends the pleasure of pointing them out."

"We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator." In Step Four I found four of the defects that had been blocking me from God: *selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear*. But now that blockage – that finely mesh screen – had opened its pores widely, allowing the Spirit of God to pour into my lonely and confused heart.

"We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience." I had a spiritual jolt in Step Three, and a much greater spiritual awareness Step Four, but after Step Five I began to develop a permanent – an ongoing – relationship with the only Power that could keep me sober. That is to say, God and my new-found AA friends.

"The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly." Although, the mental obsession was still present, I had confidence that I was on the right track. AA friends testified that once they had learned, and actually begun living in the AA program-of-action, their obsession had been removed. I believed that if I did what they did, I will certainly get what they got. Step Five is part of the on-the-job learning process. My sponsor told me that AA learning is not of the head, but of the heart!

"We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe." Of course, I did Steps Six and Seven immediately thereafter, then I had confidence that I was headed in a brand new direction. I actually began to feel the fellowship of the Spirit, that I had so often heard about . . . and this upheaval began to develop, and thank God it has never stopped growing!



Step Five

My Fourth Step inventory focused the light of truth onto unrealized driving forces of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. It also provided certain necessary tools to 'face and be rid of' these newly discovered grosser handicaps . . . but still, countless other destructive little demons, of the grosser variety, lurked in some dark dank space deep inside. They freely frolicked in this invisible environment, happily protected from the Sunlight-Of-The-Spirit. It was as though they were protected under a very opaque umbrella, weaved with the fabric those grosser handicaps of selfishness, dishonest, resentment and fear.

My sponsor informed me that Step Five was to include a *detailed* revelation of these particular grosser defects of character and shortcomings. Those little demons and devils of conceit, jealousy, carelessness, intolerance, ill temper, and all the rest of it were about to be exposed -- not only to my sponsor, but to GOD! Although my sponsor had not the power to close that umbrella, the Big Book tells me that God could and would if he were sought! (*Those little fiends must have been trembling down there!*). The sunlight of the Spirit was about to shine on those little demons – for they cannot survive in the sunlight of God's Truth!

The Fifth Step promises, on page 75, tell us that we now begin to have a spiritual experience. Well, the realization that God is soon-to-remove the very things that blocked us from seeing and acting on the truth-in-drink indeed speaks to a radical inner transformation! I believe the main goal of this vital step is to allow us (me) to realize exactly what dominant inner forces have blocking the truth-in-drink; only then will I know exactly what imperfections to ask God to remove in Steps Six and Seven.

It was very important that I acted before my mind decided to remember only what it wanted to remember. I believe that the Big Book *timetable* is very important here! We are told to do Step Four '*at once,*' Step Five at '*First opportunity,*' review for a short period and '*then*' (not later) do Step Six, go right into Step Seven '*when ready.*' Steps Five, Six and Seven are often referred to as the 'same day steps.'

I am very happy that my sponsor, Carl, helped me close that umbrella via the Big Book directions. I haven't had a drink of booze since!

The AA Program-of-Action Is So Simple That Even a Caveman Can Do It!

Just this afternoon I was thinking of how the earliest members were using the *spirit* of our AA-program-of-action long before they were first printed in the manuscript. I mean even before the six-step program (p. 263—4th edition) or the Twelve Steps as we see on the walls of our club houses today. For example, let's consider page nine; as Ebby relates the wonders of his new-found sobriety to gin & pineapple juice guzzling Bill W. He told of a *simple religious idea* (spiritual experience) and a *practical program of action* (Oxford Group tenets and absolutes) while Bill was pondering how his gin would outlast Ebby's preaching. . . . **But It didn't!**



A short time after this 'kitchen table' talk, Bill marched to Town's Hospital for his fourth and final recovery. With beer in hand and willingness in heart; he sobered up for good. Later, Ebby stopped by the hospital and reiterated, once again, his neat little formula for sobriety. Obviously, Bill was impressed because he did much of Ebby's practical program of action right then and there! (read p. 13) Of course, it worked (p. 14). If you look closely you will find that Bill actually worked the essential elements of our Twelve Step program of today. **He did them Four years before they were ever put on paper!**

So what does this story prove? I think it shows that the **spirit** of the Twelve Steps runs much deeper than the Steps on the wall or even the clear-cut-directions in the Big Book. Ebby and Bill used this mysterious spirit to find sobriety, the same one that drunks used way back through the ages, those of ancient Rome, Greece before that, Egypt before that and even back to the caveman! Oops! Well, maybe not that far back.

But the AA program-of-action is so simple that even a caveman can do it!



The Lord's Prayer (Is it in the Big Book?)

Our Father....."I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all." Big Book pg 14

Who art in Heaven....."We have found much of Heaven" Big Book pg 25

Hallowed be Thy name....."All Powerful, Guiding Creative Intelligence" Big Book pg 49; "Spirit of the Universe" pg 52; "Great Reality" pg 55; "Director", "Principal", "Father" pg 62; "Sunlight of the Spirit" pg 66; "Creator", "Spirit", "Power", used several times.

Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven....."Every Day is a day we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our daily activities. How can I best serve Thee-Thy will (not mine) be done." Big Book pg 85

Give us this day our daily bread....."What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent upon our spiritual condition." Big Book pg 85

And forgive us our trespasses....."After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken." Big Book pg 86

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever....."As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction" Big Book pg 46.

Amen

Anonymous

PS – If you research the BB I am sure you will find other relevant passages that resonate with the Lord's Prayer. ~ Bob S.

Step Two: Are you insane?

Step Two: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to **sanity**.

Upon entry to my first AA meeting the walls, refrigerator or who-knows-what would speak to me in different tones and voices, and yes, I would often answer. The predictable visual hallucinations seemed real, yet maybe they weren't. Whatever I was drinking really worked! This sort of self imposed torment had been the after effect from my non-eating, non-sleeping 'marathon' three-day sprees for many years. A friend just happened by and took me, drunk as I was, to my first AA meeting that night. I have not had a drink since.

Had I gone to a hospital instead of AA, who knows but what I might have been considered insane. What does this have to do with Step Two?

NOTHING!

To realize in what context the Big Book uses the word *insane*, I have to study – not simply read – what the author is trying to get across to me. I need to understand the white print that I cannot see. When I really study I can discover the exact context and meaning of the author's words and phrases. Case in point:

- **Sane:** When I can see and act on the truth in drink.
- **Insane:** When I cannot see and act on the truth in drink.

The Big Book provides many examples of this *context-of-definition*, but I will point out only this one: please read Jim's story on pages 35-37, and you will catch what I am getting at.

PS: -- (p. 37) "Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity."

Title Page:

The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism

Please notice that the first three words above are italicized. Italics are used to add emphasis to words or expressions. So, it seems to me that we are being notified our basic text (p. xi) is going to be presented in the form of a storybook – more of a description than a prescription.

The writers of the Big Book’s final manuscript changed Bill Wilson’s tenor from the obligatory demand that: “*You must under pain of drunkenness!*,” to a more lenient pathway to be followed, e.g.: “*This is what we did.*” Agreed, the word “must” is mentioned seventy-two times in the first 164 pages, but I believe this fits into the context of , “*Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.*” In other words the purpose of the Big Book is to illustrate how to follow the lead of those who came before us: What “*they did,*” rather than, “*this is what you ought to do.*” The first 103 pages explains how they did what they did and how they got what they got: Sobriety!

Note: The above must be taken in the historical sense that there were no 12-Steps before the Big Book was written. Members basically used a six-step program of action, plus the Oxford Group’s Four Absolutes and many of their tenets. Yet, these general ideas are the essence of our 12-Step program of today. Bill simply consolidated the pre-Big Book program-of-action, as it were, into a workable set of directions.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

I had no solution for my alcoholic malady before coming to AA, because I didn't understand the nature of the problem. I had always considered that my problem was the first drink -- that was wrong! My problem has never been the first drink because it was then too late. My problem started long before! My problem started with savoring the next shot of whisky, or perhaps a snifter of Courvoisier (if I was in the chips). Said consideration invoked a powerful *yes* or *no* debating contest to twist and turn in my alcoholic-decision-making-apparatus; you can easily guess which was awarded the laurel wreath!

Thus, the decision became surreptitiously embedded in my mind. I sometimes would push it down till the weekend because one drink often meant missing work the next day. Nevertheless, *sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly*, my fate was sealed, I was bound to drink soon because there existed no choice in the matter of drink. This was John Barleycorn's cunning, powerful and patient obsession process: *contemplation – debate – decision – first drink*, followed by the *phenomenon of craving* with all the predictably disastrous consequences. I was just as powerless before I took a drink as after I was afterward. This must be what they mean by the phrase: hopeless and helpless!

But at six months sober, a wonderful new sponsor taught me how to develop a spiritual experience as the result of living AAs Twelve Steps. This exciting inner transformation eventually freed me from the necessity of debating whether to drink or not to drink. Page 85 tells us that "*the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.*" I no longer have need to "*think the drink through*" as was the case in early recovery because God has rewarded me with the same joyous release as had Bill Wilson and Bill Dotson (p. 191). I am no longer incarcerated in the devil's prison of the mental obsession because "*if I should drink*" has been removed from my emotional vocabulary.

Thank you God!

MY FIRST CHRISTMAS SEASON

The 1975 Christmas season was in the air and I was several months sober; my phone was ringing off the hook; a host of new AA friends were keeping my spirits alive and happy. I was going to meetings all around Los Angeles as often as possible. My spare time was spent hanging around the clubhouse at 26th & Broadway, in Santa Monica. There I felt safe because the subject was generally focused on one subject: *sobriety*. Although my family was back in Indiana, I was seldom lonely and I seemed to be winning the battle against that first drink. The goose seemed to be hanging high! (A Bill Wilson saying)



However, I hadn't experienced a sober holiday season for over twenty-five years and there existed that hidden terror of the next drink, but I seemed to be successful at pushing it away, like the boy in the Big Book who was whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. The closer Christmas came, the harder I pushed away those terrifying thoughts. But, like a muscle, the harder I shoved it, the stronger it got. The terror grew! Maybe I could get past Christmas, but what about New Years Eve! I remembered the time I was so drunk in preparation that I passed out and missed the entire celebration. *Don't think about it! Don't think about it! If I think it -- I'll drink it!* The fear grew paramount. Was I headed for deep chicken fat trouble?

I had a sponsor who told me to just work the Steps off-the-wall the way I felt best and the obsession would finally subside (not a very good idea!). I now realize that I was staying sober by surviving on the fellowship; I have since learned a cliché: "*Survival on the fellowship is untreated alcoholism!*" Although numerous meetings and the AA fellowship *did*, albeit barely, keep me dry throughout that terrifying season, the time soon came when I marched into a Hollywood bar, after a parade, and almost ordered a gin & tonic. Thank God I didn't! The next week, a new sponsor led me through the Twelve Step process and within a few months the obsession to drink was lifted and has never returned.

If I were asked to offer *personal-experience-advice* for someone's first sober Christmas holiday season, it would be to find a sponsor who can help them through the 12-Step process, el pronto. The fellowship is good, but a vital spiritual experience is the ultimate solution.

Big Book Study Dispels Rumors

A friend of mine cringes at the AA Traditional institution of singleness of purpose. He relishes the anecdote that the word **alcohol** is used only once in the Twelve Steps. Well, let us delve into our basic text and check out this suspicious rumor.

Step One: In the *Drs. Opinion* this word is found on pages xxiv three times, xxvii, xxviii twice and xxix twice. In *Bill's Story* on pages 1, 8 and 13. In *More About Alcoholism* on pages 33 and 38

Step Two: *There is a Solution:* Pages: 22, 26. *We Agnostics:* Page 48

Step Three: *How It Works:* on page 63.

Step Four: *How it works:* on pages 66 twice.

Step Nine: *Into Action:* on page 76.

Step Ten: *Into Action:* on page 84 and 85.

Step Twelve: *Working With Others:* pages 98 twice, 100, 101, 102 and 103. Truth said, the word **alcohol** is used in most of the AA Steps of the Big Book! This is just one more evidence of the importance of studying our basic text and not simply reading it through. The top of page 112 tells us to **read** this book. I scribbled the word **study** above in my Big Book.

Being God's Will

During a recent spiritual retreat, it was presented that our spiritual goal should not be simply to do God's will, but we need to become God's will. While justifying this seeming far-flung conclusion with the teachings from the Big Book, the following AA fellowship Cliché came to mind:

1. Read the Big Book
2. Then, study the Big Book
3. Then, eat the Big Book
4. Then, digest the Big Book
5. Then, the Big Book becomes you, and you become it!



Of course, the Big Book does not presume that we will always know God's will, but page 85 tells us: Every day is a day when we must carry our VISION of God's will into all of our activities."

If I am living in the five parts above, I will be living in my VISION of God's will, not simply doing it because some book or program suggests that I should. In other words, I will not be on the outside looking in; rather, I will be on the inside looking out; the Great Reality is deep down within us. Living the Big Book program is completely different than simply picking and choosing the parts that my good-keen-intellectual-alcoholic-mind decides appropriate or pragmatic. No! Page 87 tells me: "As time passes we become more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely on it."

It does not escape my notice that the "fear prayer" is about being, not doing, e.g.: "We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be." [p.68] Here again, I am not asked to simply go out and do things differently, but I am to become what He would have me be.

God help me!

AA Principles

Ever-so-often an online message floats around the internet listing one ‘principle’ for each of the 12 Steps. Of course, most anyone could make up such a list and be correct, albeit vastly incomplete. If such various and sundry lists would be all inclusive, the Big Book could have been written on a single page. But the truth is that each of the twelve steps, as described in the chapters of our basic text, contain many principles which will remain everlastingly unknown to those unfortunates who have simply read, *but not studied*, the Big Book,



Many AA principles were derived from non-alcoholic writers long before the Big Book was written. There was William James who gave us the knowledge that spiritual experiences have benevolent and long lasting benefits which paved the way for Dr. Carl Jung to give Rowland Hazard the principle of the necessity of a vital spiritual experience.

William Peabody in his very popular 1931 book “*The Common Sense of Drinking*,” conveyed the principle that an alcoholic must surrender to the fact that alcohol can no longer be indulged without disaster. This book influenced many doctors, doubtless including Dr. Silkworth, who explained the alcoholic’s physical allergy -- thus the principle: “*Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.*” . . . or the non-Big Book principle: “*One drink is too many and a thousand is not enough.*”

Also, AA’s Twelve 12 Traditions were greatly derived from the principles set forth in “The Forward To The First Edition:” “*We are not an organization in the conventional sense of the word. There are no fees or dues whatsoever. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted.*” (pp. xiii-xiv)

Of course, a complete list of Big Book principles, and their meanings, would fill a big book, but it is clear that there are no few useful principles to be gleaned from the *study* of our basic text.

The Spirit of the Twelve Steps

The spirit of the Twelve Steps, as we know them today, was put to good use by alcoholics long before they were published in our Big Book.

The first paragraph of page xiii states: *“To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.”* Again, this book is going to tell us *precisely* how *“we”* have recovered. Recent AA history insights tell us that there were actually about 87 members in April of 1939 when the Big Book was published.* But seemingly these 87 members did not recover by living the Twelve Steps, as written, because *there were no Twelve Steps at that time!* Those early sots had only a six-step *program of action* before our basic text was published.



Yet, as we learned on the TITLE PAGE, this *is* a *story book* meant to explain how the early alcoholics found recovery. (What! Without the Twelve Steps!?) So, is there a contradiction here? I say No! This is because the spirit of the Twelve Steps existed for use by one and all from the very beginning; long before the six steps morphed into twelve.

I believe that this spirit was embedded in the Oxford Group's Four Absolutes: Honesty, Unselfishness, Love and Purity, along with the OG tenets mentioned on page xvi. Let's check it out:

- Moral Inventory (Step 4) (Step 10)
- Confession (Step 5)
- Restitution (Steps 8 & 9)
- Helpfulness (Step 12)
- Belief in God (Step 2)
- Dependence on God (Step 3) (Steps 6 & 7)

Oh yes, as for Step One: The first mentioned absolute was "Honesty;" well, there you have our First Step (*Okay, that may be a bit of stretch, so let's give Dr. Silkworth his due acknowledgement*).

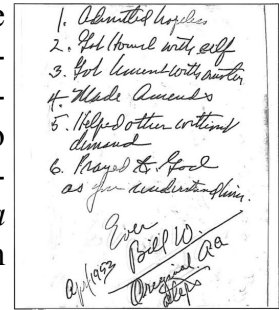
Page 59, just before listing the twelve steps, tells us: *“These are the steps we took . . .”* Just so, but only in the essence of the spirit of the Twelve Steps.

So, those first 100 (maybe 87) members were, in essence, living in the spirit of the Twelve Step Program of action as we know it today. The Big Book simply gave it some good orderly direction.

*This number varies in assessment.

Origin of the Twelve Steps.

On a December evening of 1938, Bill W. was lying in bed writing the chapter, "How It Works" on a pad of yellow scratch paper. He considered the six-step program of that time as allowing "too many loop-holes" and should probably be broken into smaller pieces so as to *broaden and deepen* the spiritual implications of his impending program of action. He asked for guidance (*The Oxford Group used a term: "Automatic writing"*) and within a half hour he had written Twelve Steps on that yellow pad! Thank you God!



Many years later he wrote, in the Forward to Second Edition, six of the various Oxford Group tenets that he considered relevant to alcoholic recovery (p. xvi). Although the Oxford Group had no "steps," these tenets greatly resonated with the six-step program used by AAs the years before the Big Book was written in 1939.

While mulling over these Oxford Group Tenets, I connected (at least to my way of thinking) as how they relate to our Twelve Step program of today.

The Oxford Group had many different tenets, but Bill Wilson accepted only six of these. They are revealed on page xvi:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Need for moral inventory | Step 4 |
| 2. Confession of personality defects | Step 1 & 5 |
| 3. Restitution to those harmed | Steps 8 & 9 |
| 4. Helpfulness to others | Step 12 |
| 5. Necessity of belief in God | Steps 2, 3 & 11 |
| 6. Dependence upon God | Steps 6, 7, 10 & 11 |

The Oxford Group members attempted to live in the spirit of the Four Absolutes – honesty, unselfishness, love and purity. Bill never explicitly mentioned these in our basic text, but it takes only slight research to find them surreptitiously embedded therein.

Bill's notions about the Twelve Steps came from other sources as well. Without Dr. Doctor Silkworth's opinions about the physical allergy and mental obsession there would not have been the knowledge about Step One we have today. Someone said the Doctor's opinion is the only opinion that counts in AA. And for Step Two, Psychiatrist Carl Jung gave us our solution as a *vital spiritual experience* (p. 27), and then William James' book "Varieties of Spiritual Experience" helped convince Bill that his "mountain top" experience was real, and not a hallucination (p. 14).

Bill claimed not to take credit for any original idea in the Big Book, but aren't we lucky that he put all of this together for us.

Step Ten off the Wall

Step 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

This step seems to have but two simple parts: to take personal inventory and when I am wrong to promptly admit it – pretty simple! But let’s just test it out and see how effective it really is. When I came to A.A. my sponsor told me I had a deceitful mind that would justify most any decision (especially that first drink). Well, maybe these two parts of Step Ten would change all that. Let’s do an experiment: Let us suppose I swiped a Hershey bar from the local market. Okay, my ‘personal inventory’ tells me I was wrong . . . so, of course I admit it. So what! I got by with it didn’t I? I think I will swipe another one next chance I get. Uh-Oh! Step Ten didn’t change my deceitful mind and behavior at all – and I read it right off the clubhouse wall. I did just what it said! Phooey!

But, hold the phone! What about Step Ten from the Big Book on page 84? Let’s look at this chart below:

The first thing to be noticed is that it has five parts, not two! Well, let’s see how this works out when I steal a Hershey bar.

1. I stole the Hershey bar because I am a selfish, dishonest thief.
2. I asked God for help right away. I felt guilty.
3. I went to the nearest phone and immediately told my sponsor what I had done.
4. Obeying my sponsor, I quickly took the Hershey bar back to the store manager and begged him not to call the cops. Please!
5. Turning my thoughts toward helping someone, I went to the next A.A. meeting to see how my experience might benefit others.

TENTH STEP	-- We learned this in Step #
1 st Part <u>Continue</u> to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear.	4
2 nd Part When these crop up, we ask God <u>at once</u> to remove them.	6&7
3 rd Part We discuss them with someone <u>immediately</u>	5
4 th Part and make amends <u>quickly</u> if we have harmed anyone.	8&9
5 th Part <u>Then</u> we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Please read page 84.	

Wow, this is really different from Step Ten “off-the-wall!” I will probably never steal another Hershey bar or anything else ever again. This Step Ten – **the one from the Big Book** – really works!

Old cliché: The steps off the wall provide off the wall results.

Bob S., Richmond, Ind.