

## EXTRACTS FROM 34 SOURCES CONCERNING ANONYMITY

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A SUMMARY: ADVISORY ACTIONS OF THE  
GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCES OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
1951-1993 PUBLIC INFORMATION

ADVISORY ACTIONS based upon requests of the CONFERENCE PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE (page 64)

1968 It was recommended that: (page 65)

The showing of the full face of an A.A. member at the level of press, TV, and films is a violation of our tradition of anonymity, even though the name is withheld.

page 65, 2nd column, paragraph 10

The following Conference action of 1968 be reaffirmed:

The showing of the full face on an A.A. member, identified as an A.A. member, at the level of press, T.V., and film, is a violation of our Tradition of Anonymity even though the name is withheld.

page 67, 1st column, paragraph 1

AA EVERYWHERE-ANYWHERE

It has long been a custom for G.S.O. to send an annual letter to media contacts working on newspapers and magazines and in the world of broadcasting to remind them of A.A.'s Tradition of Anonymity and its

significance.

page 70, paragraph 2, lines 1-5

#### AA PAMPHLETS

##### AA AS A RESOURCE FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

Traditionally, A.A. members never disclose their association with the movement in print, on the air, or through any other public medium. And on one has the right to break the anonymity of another member anywhere.

page 7, paragraph 2, lines 3-9

##### AA TRADITION HOW IT DEVELOPED

...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 truly humble modesty.

page 9, paragraph 1, lines 2-6

Though we are A.A.s, and A.A. must come first, we are also citizens of the world. Besides, we are, like our good friends the physicians, honor-bound to share what we know with all.

Therefore, it seems to me that some of us must heed the call from other fields. And those who do, need only remember first and last they are A.A.s; that in their new activities they are individuals only. This means that they will respect the principles of anonymity in the press; that if they do appear before the general public they will not describe themselves as A.A.s; that they will refrain from emphasizing their A.A. status in appeals for money or publicity.

page 21, paragraph 5, lines 9-13 & page 22, paragraph 1

A.A. is concerned solely with the personal recovery and continued sobriety of individual alcoholics who turn to the Fellowship for help. The movement does not engage in the field of alcoholism research, or medical or psychiatric treatment, and does not endorse any causes -- although A.A. members often participate in other activities as individuals.

The movement has adopted a policy of "cooperation but non-affiliation" with other organizations concerned with the problem of alcoholism.

Alcoholics Anonymous is self-supporting through its own groups and members and declines contributions from outside sources. A.A. members preserve personal anonymity at the level of press, films, and broadcast media.

page 31, paragraphs 4-6

...it is a fact that most of us do follow, in our personal lives, the Twelve suggested Steps to recovery. But we do this from choice. We prefer recovery to death. Then, little by little, we perceive that the spiritual basis of life is best. We conform because we want to.

Likewise, most AA groups become willing to follow the "Twelve Points of Tradition to Assure Our Future," The groups are willing to avoid controversy over outside issues such as politics, reform, or religion; they stick to their single purpose of helping alcoholics to recover; they increasingly rely on self-support rather than outside charity. More and more do they insist on modesty and anonymity in their public relations. The AA groups follow these other traditional principles for the very same reason that the individual AA follows the Twelve Steps to recovery. Groups see they would disintegrate if they didn't and they soon discover that adherence to our Tradition and experience is the foundation for a happier and more effective group life.

Nowhere in AA is there to be seen any constituted human authority that can compel an AA group to do anything. Some AA groups, for example, elect their leaders. But even with such a mandate, each leader soon discovers that while he can always guide by example or persuasion he can never boss, else at election time he may find himself passed by.

The majority of AA groups do not even choose leaders. They prefer rotating committees to handle their simple affairs. These committees are invariably regarded as servants; they have only the authorization to serve, never to command. Each committee carries out what it believes to be the wishes of its group. That is all.

page 32, paragraph 5, lines 1-6 & page 33, paragraphs 1-3, lines 1-7

Anonymity is already a cornerstone of our public relations policy.

page 35, paragraph 1, lines 15 & 16

Once we became sure that our feet were set on the right track, we decided upon a book in which we could tell other alcoholics the good news. As the book took form we inscribed in it the essence of our experience. It was product of thousands of hours of discussion. It truly represented the collective voice, heart, and conscience of those of us who had pioneered the first four years of AA.

As the day of publication approached we racked our brains to find a suitable name for the volume. We must have considered at least two hundred titles. Thinking up titles and voting upon them at meetings became one of our main activities. A great welter of discussion and argument finally narrowed our choice to a single pair of names. Should we call our new book The Way Out or should we call it Alcoholics Anonymous? That was the final question. A last-minute vote was taken by the Akron and New York groups. By a narrow majority the verdict was for naming our book The Way Out. Just before we went to print someone suggested there might be other books having the same title. One of our early Lone Members (dear old Fitz M., who then lived in Washington) went over to the Library of Congress to investigate. He found exactly twelve books already titled The Way Out. When this information was passed around, we shivered at the possibility of being the "thirteenth Way Out." So Alcoholics Anonymous became first choice. That's how we got a name for our book of experience, a name for our movement and, as we are now beginning to see, a Tradition of the greatest spiritual import. God does move in mysterious ways his wonders to perform!

In the book Alcoholics Anonymous there are only three references to the principle of anonymity. The foreword of our first edition states: "Being mostly business or professional folk some of us could not carry on our occupations if known" and "When writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, we urge each of our fellowship to omit his personal name, designating himself instead as 'a member of Alcoholics Anonymous,'" and then, "very earnestly we ask the press also to observe this request for otherwise we shall be greatly handicapped."

page 35, paragraph 2, lines 9-17, paragraph 3 & page 36, paragraph 1

...we must realize that the future safety and effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous may depend upon its preservation.

The vital question is: Just where shall we fix this point where personalities fade out and anonymity begins?

As a matter of fact, few of us are anonymous so far as our daily contacts go. We have dropped anonymity at this level because we think our friends and associates ought to know about Alcoholics Anonymous and what it has done for us. We also wish to lose the fear of admitting that we are alcoholics. Though we earnestly request reporters not do disclose our identities, we frequently speak before semipublic gatherings under our right names. We wish to impress audiences that our alcoholism is a sickness we no longer fear to discuss before anyone. So far, so good.

If, however, we venture beyond this limit we shall surely lose the principle of anonymity forever. If every AA felt free to publish his own name, picture, and story we would soon be launched upon a vast orgy of personal publicity which obviously could have no limit whatever. Isn't this where, by the strongest kind of attraction, we must draw the line?

1. Therefore, it should be the privilege of each AA to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow AAs should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.

2. Conversely, the individual AA ought to respect the feeling of his local group about anonymity. If members of his group wish to be less conspicuous in their locality than he does, he ought to go along with them until they change their views.

3. It ought to be a worldwide policy that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish, in connection with any A.A.

activity, his name or picture in mediums of public circulation. This would not, however, restrict the use of his name in other public activities, provided of course, he does not disclose his AA membership.

page 37, paragraph 3, lines 3-6, paragraphs 4-7 & page 38, paragraphs 1 & 2

Firstly, I believe most of us would agree that the general idea of anonymity is sound, because it encourages alcoholics and the families of alcoholics to approach us for help. Still fearful of being stigmatized, they regard our anonymity as an assurance their problems will be kept confidential, that the alcoholic skeleton in the family closet will not wander in the streets.

Secondly, the policy of anonymity is a protection to our cause. It prevents our founders or leaders, so called, from becoming household names who might at any time get drunk and give AA a black eye. No one need say that couldn't happen here. It could.

page 38, paragraphs 4 & 5

Fourthly, why does the general public regard us so favorably? Is it simply because we are bringing recovery to lots of alcoholics? No, this can hardly be the whole story. However impressed he may be by our recoveries, John Q. Public is even more interested in our way of life. Weary of pressure selling, spectacular promotion, and shouting public characters, he is refreshed by our quietness, modesty, and anonymity. It may well be that he feels a great spiritual power is being generated on this account--that something new has come into his own life.

page 39, paragraph 1

In a spiritual sense, anonymity amounts to the renunciation of personal prestige as an instrument of general policy.

page 39, paragraph 2, lines 4-7

Since we advertise anonymity to every newcomer, we ought, of course, to preserve a new member's anonymity so long as he wishes it preserved -- because, when he read our publicity and came to us, we contracted to do exactly that. And even if he wants to come in under an assumed name, we should assure him he can. If wishes us to refrain from discussing his case with anyone, even other A.A. members, we ought to respect that wish too. While most newcomers do not care a rap who knows about their alcoholism, there are others who care very much. Let us guard them in every way until they get over that feeling.

Then come the problem of the newcomer who wishes to drop his anonymity too fast. He rushes to all his friends with the glad news of A.A. If his group does not caution him he may rush to a newspaper office or a microphone to tell the wide world all about himself. He is also likely to tell everyone the innermost details of his personal life, soon to find that, in this respect, he has altogether too much publicity! We ought to suggest to him that he take things easy; that he first get on his own feet before talking about A.A. to all and sundry; that no one thinks of publicizing AA without being sure of the approval of his own group.

page 39, paragraph 3, lines 1-14 & paragraph 4

In most places, but not all, it is customary for A.A.s to use their own names when speaking before public or semipublic gathering. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters are present they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program. This preserves the principle of anonymity so far as the general public is concerned and at the same time represents us as a group of alcoholics who no longer fear to let our friends know that we have been very sick people.

In practice, then, the principle of anonymity seems to come down to this: with one very important exception, the question of how far each individual or group shall go in dropping anonymity is left strictly to the individual or group concerned. The exception is: that all groups or individuals, when writing or speaking for publication as members of Alcoholics Anonymous, feel bound never to disclose their true names. Except

for very cases, it is at this point of publication that nearly all of us feel we should draw the line on anonymity. We ought not disclose ourselves to the general public through the media of the press, in pictures or on the radio.

page 40, paragraph 2 & page 41, paragraph 1

Great modesty and humility are needed by every AA for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to AA as a whole. This principle of anonymity before the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attributes forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction and seldom, if ever, upon promotion.

page 41, paragraph 3

Then came AA. We faced about and found ourselves on a new high road where the direction signs said never a word about power, fame, or wealth. The new signs read, "This way to sanity and serenity--the price is self-sacrifice."

Our new book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, states that "anonymity is the greatest protection our Society can ever have." it says also that "spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice."

Let's turn to AA's twenty years of experience and see how we arrived at that belief, now expressed in our Traditions Eleven and Twelve.

At the beginning we sacrificed alcohol. We had to, or it would have killed us. But we couldn't get rid of alcohol unless we made other sacrifices. Big-shotism and phony thinking had to go. We had to toss self-justification, self-pity, and anger right out the window. We had to quit the crazy contest for personal prestige and big bank balances. We had to take personal responsibility for our sorry state and quit blaming others for it.

Were these sacrifices? Yes, they were. To gain enough humility and self-respect to stay alive at all we had to give up what had really been our dearest possession--our ambitions and our illegitimate pride.

But even this was not enough. Sacrifice had to go much further. Other people had to benefit too. So we took on some Twelve Step work; we began to carry the AA message. We sacrificed time, energy, and our own money to do this. We couldn't keep what we had unless we gave it away.

Did we demand that our new prospects give us anything? Were we asking them for power over their lives, for fame for our good work, or for a cent of their money? No, we were not. We found that if we demanded any of these things our Twelve Step work went flat. So these natural desires had to be sacrificed; otherwise, our prospects received little or no sobriety. Nor, indeed, did we.

Thus we learned that sacrifice had to bring a double benefit, or else little at all. We began to know about the kind of giving of ourselves that had no price tag on it.

When the first AA group took form, we soon learned a lot more of this. We found that each of us had to make willing sacrifices for the group itself, sacrifices for the common welfare. The group, in turn, found that it had to give up many of its own rights for the protection and welfare of each member, and for AA as a whole. These sacrifices had to be made or AA couldn't continue to exist.

Out of these experiences and realizations, the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous began to take shape and substance.

Gradually we saw that the unity, the effectiveness--yes, even the survival--of AA would always depend upon our continued willingness to sacrifice our personal ambitions and desires for the common safety and welfare. Just as sacrifice meant survival for the individual, so did sacrifice mean unity and survival for the group and for AA's entire Fellowship.

Viewed in this light, AA's Twelve Traditions are little else than a

list of sacrifices which the experience of twenty years has taught us that we must make, individually and collectively, if AA itself is to stay alive and healthy.

In our Twelve Traditions we have set our faces against nearly every trend in the outside world.

We have denied ourselves personal government, professionalism, and the right to say who our members shall be. We have abandoned do-goodism, reform, and paternalism. We refuse charitable money and prefer to pay our own way. We will cooperate with practically everybody, yet we decline to marry our Society to anyone. We abstain from public controversy and will not quarrel among ourselves about those things that so rip society asunder--religion, politics, and reform. We have but one purpose: to carry the AA message to the sick alcoholic who wants it.

We take these attitudes not at all because we claim special virtue or wisdom; we do these things because hard experience has told us that we must--if AA is to survive in the distraught world of today. We also give up rights and make sacrifices because we ought to--and, better yet, because we want to. AA is a power greater than any of us; it must go on living or else uncounted thousands of our kind will surely die. This we know.

page 42, paragraph 1, lines 6-10, paragraphs 2-8 & page 43

The old files at AA Headquarters reveal many scores of such experiences with broken anonymity. Most of them point up the same lessons.

They tell us we alcoholics are the biggest rationalizers in the world; that fortified with the excuse we are doing great things for AA we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of personal power and prestige, public honors, and money--the same implacable urges that when frustrated once caused us to drink; the same forces that are today ripping the globe apart at its seams. Moreover, they make clear that enough spectacular anonymity breakers could someday carry out whole Society down into that ruinous dead end with them.

So we are certain that if such forces ever rule our Fellowship, we will perish too, just as other societies have perished throughout human history. Let us not suppose for a moment that we recovered alcoholics are so much better or stronger than other folks; or that because in twenty years nothing has ever happened to AA, nothing ever can.

Our really great hope lies in the fact that our total experience, as alcoholics and as AA members has at last taught us the immense power of these forces for self-destruction. These hard-won lessons have made us entirely willing to undertake every personal sacrifice necessary for the preservation of our treasured Fellowship.

This is why we see anonymity at the general public level as our chief protection against ourselves, the guardian of all our Traditions, and the greatest symbol of self-sacrifice that we know.

Of course, no AA need be anonymous to family, friends, or neighbors. Disclosure there is usually right and good. Nor is there any special danger when we speak at group or semi-public AA meetings, provided press reports reveal first names only.

But before the general public--press, radio, films, television, and the like--the revelation of full names and pictures is the point of peril. This is the main escape hatch for the fearful destructive forces that still lie latent in us all. Here the lid can and must stay down.

We now fully realize that 100% personal anonymity before the public is just as vital to the life of AA as 100 percent sobriety is to the life of each and every member. This is not the counsel of fear; it is the prudent voice of long experience.

page 48, paragraphs 3-6 & page 49, paragraphs 1-4

Thus I learned that the temporary or seeming good can often be the deadly enemy of the permanent best. When it comes to survival for AA, nothing short of our very best will be good enough.

We want to maintain 100% anonymity for still another potent reason, one often overlooked. Instead of securing us more publicity, repeated

self-serving anonymity breaks could severely damage the wonderful relation we now enjoy with press and public alike. We could wind up with a poor press and little public confidence at all.

For many years, news channels all over the world have showered AA with enthusiastic publicity, a never ending stream of it, far out of proportion to the news values involved. Editors tell us why this is. They give us extra space and time because their confidence in AA is complete. The very foundation of that high confidence is, they say, our continual insistence on personal anonymity at the press level.

Never before had news outlets and public relations experts heard of a society that absolutely refused personally to advertise its leaders or members. To them, this strange and refreshing novelty has always been proof positive that AA is on the square, that nobody has an angle.

This, they tell us, is the prime reason for their goodwill. This is why, in season and out, they continue to carry the AA message of recovery to the whole world.

If, through enough anonymity lapses, we finally caused the press, the public, and our alcoholic prospects themselves to wonder about our motives, we'd surely lose this priceless asset; and, along with it, countless prospective members.

page 49, paragraph 4, lines 8-12, paragraph 5 & page 50, paragraphs 1-3

#### IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL

Anonymity helps the Fellowship to govern itself by principles rather than personalities; by attraction rather than promotion. We openly share our program of recovery, but not the names of the individuals in it.

page 4, paragraph 3, lines 1-5

#### IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL

Alcoholism is a disease. It is not a disgrace to be recovering from it. Anonymity means we do not have our full names and A.A. membership published in newspapers or magazines, or used on broadcasts to glorify ourselves.

page 23, paragraph 5, lines 1-5

#### LETTER TO A WOMAN ALCOHOLIC

A.A. provides absolute anonymity;...

page 13, paragraph 4, lines 3 & 4

#### PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL

In A.A., the group has strict limitations, but the individual has scarcely any. Remembering to observe the Traditions of anonymity and non-endorsement, he can carry A.A.'s message into every troubled area of this very troubled world.

page 7, paragraph 6

#### SPEAKING AT NON-AA MEETINGS

Identification as an alcoholic (first name only, usually); request that anonymity be respected, giving reasons -- Traditions, etc.

page 12, paragraph 4, lines 2-4

There may be some here who are not familiar with our Tradition of personal anonymity at the public level:

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

Thus we respectfully ask that no A.A. speaker -- or, indeed, any A.A. member -- be identified by full name in published or broadcast reports of our meetings.

The assurance of anonymity is essential in our effort to help other problem drinkers who may wish to share our recovery program with us. And our Tradition of anonymity reminds us that A.A. principles come before personalities.

page 12, paragraphs 6-9

1. They mention the fact that they speak for themselves only, not for A.A. as a whole.

2. If they are known in the community as members of A.A., their membership might be revealed by the press, even though the members may not have stated their full names. To prevent this, A.A. members clarify the A.A. Traditions of anonymity with the people arranging the meeting. The A.A. or the meeting chairperson may read the Traditions before the talk and ask that they be respected.

page 20, paragraphs 1 & 2, lines 1-9

"In all public relationships, A.A.'s sole objective is to help the still-suffering alcoholic. Always mindful of the importance of personal anonymity, we believe this can be done by making known to him and to those who may be interested in his problem, our own experience as individuals and as a fellowship in learning to live without alcohol. We believe that our experience should be made available freely to all who express sincere interest. We believe further that all our efforts in this field should reflect our gratitude for the gift of sobriety and our awareness that many outside A.A. are equally concerned with the serious problem of alcoholism."

page 20, paragraph 6

#### THE AA GROUP

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

page 9, paragraph 1

At the level of press, radio and film, anonymity stresses the equality in A.A. of all its members.

page 9, paragraph 3, lines 1 & 2

Most importantly, the Anonymity Tradition reminds us that is the A.A. message, not the messenger, that counts.

At the personal level, anonymity assures privacy for all members, a safeguard often of special significance to newcomers who may hesitate to seek help in A.A. if they have any reason to believe their alcoholism may be



exposed publicly.

page 9, paragraph 3, lines 6-8 & paragraph 4

In printed articles, we are identified by our first names and last initials only.

We use our first names and last initials only when speaking as A.A. members at non-A.A. meetings.

page 9, paragraph 6, lines 3 & 4 & paragraph 7, lines 1-3

We do not put "A.A." envelopes sent through the mails, not even on correspondence directed to A.A. entities. On material to be posted on A.A. bulletin boards and printed on A.A. programs that the general public might see, we omit last names and identifying titles of all members.

page 10, paragraph 1

We may use last names within our group.

page 10, paragraph 2, line 1

The chairperson may stress the importance of preserving the anonymity of A.A. members outside the meeting room and further caution attendees to "leave any confidences you hear in these rooms behind when you go."

page 19, paragraph 1, lines 1-5

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.

page 31, paragraph 1

humility...for some people, the spiritual essence of anonymity.

page 34, paragraph 3, lines 7 & 8

#### THE CO-FOUNDERS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Traditions Ten, Eleven, and Twelve are really concerned with anonymity, each in its own way. Our public relations should be characterized by anonymity -- by the principle of attracting people to us, rather than by press agency. In fact, it is best to let our friends recommend us.

page 32, paragraph 3, lines 1-6

Anonymity, to my mind is the spiritual key to all the Traditions. Why is this so? Our book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions explains:

"...Anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes A.A. life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole Society and under which we may grow and work in unity.

"We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have."

page 33, paragraphs 1-3

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED

### The Eleventh Tradition

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.

page 22, heading

Alcoholics who have recovered through our program are themselves the strongest attraction that A.A. has. When people are asked what led them to seek A.A. help, the answer given most often is: "An A.A. member." Their chances would have been slim if all of us had remained completely in hiding. But many of us have chosen to tell our friends, neighbors, employers, co-workers, doctors, or spiritual advisers that we are in A.A. -- and when we do so, we are not breaking our anonymity in the meaning of this Tradition.

Suppose a sick alcoholic never has the good fortune to meet an A.A. How is such a person going to find us? The search will be difficult if the local group thinks it should be anonymous, too. The Tradition is talking about "personal anonymity," remember? Alcoholics will not be attracted to A.A. if they don't know that it exists or if they have distorted, unfavorable impressions of its members or its program.

Giving the general public an accurate picture of A.A. is the chief job of our public information committees. In addition, they often carry the message to certain groups -- from police officers to personal directors -- whose work includes contact with active alcoholics.

page 23, paragraphs 1-3

According to a Conference opinion, members are breaking their anonymity when they are identified on TV as A.A.'s and their faces are shown -- whether or not their names are given.

page 23, paragraph 4, lines 5-8

The "shadow" method diagrammed here is simple, relaxed -- and appropriate. For we are not selling personalities -- we are explaining A.A. Personal anonymity breaks in the public media not only may discourage timid prospects; they may threaten the anonymity-breaker's own sobriety, by violating the spirit of the A.A. program and Traditions....

page 23, paragraph 5, lines 4-10

### The Twelfth Tradition

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

page 24, heading

Let us always remember that anonymity -- not taking credit for our own or other's recovery -- is humility at work.

page 24, figure caption

Anonymity, as we observe it in A.A., is at root a simple expression of humility. When we use the Twelve Steps to recover from alcoholism, we are each trying to achieve real humility, to put our self-respect on a solid base of truth, rather than on fantasies about ourselves. When we use the Twelve Traditions to work together in A.A.; as a fellowship, by recognizing A.A.'s true place in the world.

Tradition One reminds each of us that we are not recovering on our own, that we should control our personal desires and ambitions in order to guard the unity of our group and our Fellowship. We ought not (Tradition Two) fancy ourselves as big shots in A.A., no matter what office we hold.

All of us are just alcoholics together, and in our groups we are not entitled (Tradition Three) to rule on the qualifications of other alcoholics seeking the same help that we've had. Yes, a group needs humility, too. It may make its name public, but in the spirit of anonymity it should see the Whatever Group as merely part of a bigger whole (Tradition Four), careful in every enterprise to consider the welfare of all the other groups that make up A.A. In both group and individual activities, we should remember what the full name of our Fellowship is. It does not represent any established religion, nor is it a new religion. We are not evangelists or gurus out to save humanity; we are anonymous alcoholics trying to help other alcoholics (Tradition Five).

In the rising battle against alcoholism, we ought not let our pride in A.A. mislead us into linking our Fellowship with other agencies, in order to bid for a share in their power, prestige, and funds. If we keep Traditions Six and Seven in mind, we will instead direct all our efforts toward A.A.'s own unique purpose.

When we go on Twelve Step calls, we should not tell ourselves how noble we are for doing such valuable work without pay. The meaning of Twelve Step work cannot be measured in money (Tradition Eight), and we have received advance pay for it, in coin of far greater worth -- our very lives. In the same Tradition, it's suggested that a service center maintains A.A. humility by paying its employees decent wages -- rather than considering A.A. so virtuous an outfit that employment there is a favor.

When we are given special responsibilities within A.A., Tradition Nine defines these as opportunities to serve, not titles to flaunt. The humility of the Fellowship itself is safeguarded by Tradition Ten, with the refusal to set ourselves up as general authorities, swinging our collective weight around in the public arena.

We do not want to sell our program as a "surefire remedy" in the extravagant terms of a promotional campaign (Tradition Eleven), nor dramatize it by identifying noted people in A.A., thereby implying that recovery has been for each of us an individual accomplishment. As Tradition Twelve reminds us, we have something stronger than our human personalities to rely on. Our principles come first -- and they are not our own invention. They reflect eternal spiritual values. With this Tradition, both as individuals and as a fellowship, we humbly acknowledge our dependence on a power higher than ourselves.

page 25

#### UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

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

page 5, paragraph 1

...anonymity serves two different yet equally vital functions:

At the personal level, anonymity provides protection for all members from identification as alcoholics, a safeguard often of special importance to newcomers.

At the level of press, radio, TV, and films, anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their A.A. affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain.

page 5, paragraphs 4 & 5

From its earliest days, A.A. has promised personal anonymity to all who attend its meetings. Because its founders and first members were recovering alcoholics themselves, they knew from their own experience how ashamed most alcoholics are about their drinking, how fearful they are of public exposure.

page 5, paragraph 6, lines 1-7

...A.A. as a whole seeks to ensure that individual members stay as private and protected as they wish, or as open as they wish, about belonging to the Fellowship; but always with the understanding that anonymity at the level of the press, radio, TV, and films is crucial to our continuing sobriety and growth -- at both the personal and group levels.

page 6, paragraph 1, lines 5-13

Q Should I tell people who seem to have a drinking problem about my A.A. affiliation?

A This is a personal matter. However, the spirit of the program is one of sharing and a recent study of A.A. members shows that a high proportion of them joined the Fellowship through another member.

page 8, paragraph 9 & 10, lines 1-5

It is not the media's responsibility to maintain our Traditions; it is our own individual responsibility.

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.

A.A. members may disclose their identify and speak as recovered alcoholics, giving radio and TV interviews, without violating the Traditions -- so long as their A.A. membership is not revealed.

A.A. members may speak as A.A. members only if their names or faces are not revealed. They speak not for A.A. but as individual members.

page 10, paragraphs 1-4

When speaking as A.A. members at non-A.A. meetings, usually use first names only.

page 10, paragraph 6

Use last names within the Fellowship,...

page 10, paragraph 9

Won't everyone know I am an alcoholic if I come into A.A.?

Anonymity is and always has been the basis of the A.A. program.

A.A.s never disclose their association with the movement in print, on the air, or through any other public media. And no one had the right to break anonymity of another member.

page 11, paragraph 2 & paragraph 1, lines 1,2,6-10

#### 44 QUESTIONS

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page 11, paragraph 2 & paragraph 1, lines 1,2,6-10

Will A.A. work for the person who has really 'hit bottom'?

The record shows that A.A. will work for almost anyone who really wants to stop drinking, no matter what the person's economic or social background may be.

The worth of a member in A.A. is not judged on the basis of the clothes worn, the handling of language, or the size (or existence) of the bank balance. The only thing that counts in A.A. is whether or not the newcomer really wants to stop drinking.

page 13, paragraphs 1 & 2, lines 1-4 & paragraph 3, lines 5-10

#### AS BILL SEES IT

...it is only at the top public level that anonymity is expected.

page 43, paragraph 2, lines 5 & 6

"In my view, there isn't the slightest objection to groups who wish to remain strictly anonymous, or to people who think they would not like their membership in A.A. known at all. That is their business, and this is a very natural reaction.

"However, most people find that anonymity to this degree is not necessary, or even desirable. Once one is fairly sober, and sure of this, there seems no reason for failing to talk about A.A. membership in the right places. This has a tendency to bring in other people. Word of mouth is one of our most important communications.

"So we should criticize neither the people who wish to remain silent, nor even the people who wish to talk too much about belonging to A.A., provided they do not do so at the public level and thus compromise our whole Society."

page 120

They do not realize that, by breaking anonymity, they are unconsciously pursuing those old and perilous illusions once more. They forget that the keeping of one's anonymity often means as sacrifice of one's desire for power, prestige, and money.

page 198, paragraph 2, lines 3-8

"In some sections of A.A., anonymity is carried to the point of real absurdity. Members are on such a poor basis of

communication that they don't even know each other's last names or where each lives.

page 241, paragraph 1, lines 1-5

We now fully realize that 100 per cent personal anonymity before the public is just as vital to the life of A.A. as 100 per cent sobriety is to the life of each and every member. This is not the counsel of fear; it is the prudent voice of long experience.

page 299, paragraph 3

#### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE

...those Twelve Traditions still on my mind. Each of them I saw is an exercise in humility that can guard us in everyday A.A. affairs and protect us from ourselves. If A.A. were really guided by the Twelve Traditions, we could not possibly be split by politics, religion, money, or by any old-timers who might take a notion to be big shots. With none of us throwing our weight in public, nobody could possibly exploit A.A. for personal advantage, that is sure. For the first time I saw A.A.'s anonymity for what it really is. It isn't just something to save us from alcoholic shame and stigma; its deeper purpose is actually to keep those fool egos of ours from running hog wild after money and public fame at A.A.'s expense. It really means personal and group sacrifice for the benefit of all A.A.

page 43, paragraph 2, lines 2-13

Because of the stigma then attached to the condition, most alcoholics wanted to be anonymous. We were afraid also of developing erratic public characters who, through broken anonymity, might get drunk in public and so destroy confidence in us. The Oxford Groups, on the contrary, depended very much upon the use of prominent names--something that was doubtless all right for them but mighty hazardous for us. Our debt to them, nevertheless, was the is immense, and so the final breakaway was very painful.

page 75, paragraph 1, lines 1-9

Tradition Eleven grew out of a large and strenuous public relations experience. Today, it reads as follows: "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity as the level of press, radio, and films."

page 128, paragraph 1, lines 1-3 & paragraph 2

...A.A.'s Tradition Eleven was developed. To us it represents more than a sound public relations policy. It is more than a denial of self-seeking. Tradition Eleven is certainly a constant reminder that

personal ambition has no place in A.A., but it also implies that each member ought to become an active guardian of our fellowship in its relation with the general public.

As we have seen, anonymity is the protective mantle that covers our whole society. But it is more than protection; it has another dimension, a spiritual significance. And this leads to Tradition Twelve, which reads: "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

In my belief, the entire future of our fellowship hangs upon this vital principle. If we continue to be filled with the spirit and practice of anonymity, no shoal or reef can wreck us. If we forget this principle, the lid to Pandora's box will be off and the spirits of Money, Power, and Prestige will be loosed among us. Obsessed by these evil genii, we might well founder and break up. I devoutly believe this will never happen. No A.A. principle merits more study and application than this one. I am positive that A.A.'s anonymity is the key to long-time survival.

The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because A.A.'s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit, well symbolized by anonymity, is the foundation of all these Traditions. It is A.A.'s proved willingness to make these sacrifices that gives people high confidence in our future.

But in the beginning anonymity was not born of confidence; it was the child of our early fears. Our first nameless groups of alcoholics were secret societies. New prospects could find us only through a few trusted friends. The bare hint of publicity, even when it was not for ourselves but for our work, shocked us. Although we were no longer drinking, we still thought we had to hide from public distrust and contempt.

When the Big Book appeared in 1939, we called it Alcoholics Anonymous. Its original Foreword made this revealing statement: "It is important that we remain anonymous because we are too few, at present, to handle the overwhelming number of personal appeals which may result from this publication. Being mostly business or professional folks, we could not well carry on our occupations in such an event." Between these lines it is easy to read our fear that large numbers of incoming people might break our anonymity wide open.

page 131, paragraph 3, lines 1-6 & paragraphs 4 & 5 & page 132, paragraphs 1-3

Clearly, each A.A. member's name, and his story too, had to be kept confidential, if he wished it to be. This was our first lesson in the practical application of anonymity.

page 132, paragraph 4, lines 8-10

...anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public.

page 134, paragraph 3, lines 1-5

We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have.

page 134, paragraph 4

Alcoholics Anonymous has a principle called anonymity--no public big shots allowed.

page 135, paragraph 2, lines 12-14

Finding answers to these public relations puzzlers has been a long process. After much trial and error, sometimes punctuated by painful mistakes, the attitudes and practices that would work best for us emerged. The basic ones can be seen today in the A.A. Traditions: 100 per cent anonymity at the public level; no use of the A.A. name for the benefit of other causes, however worthy; no endorsements or alliances; the carrying of the message as the single purpose for Alcoholics Anonymous; no professionalism; public relations by the principle of attraction

rather than promotion--these were some of the hard-learned lessons.

page 198, paragraph 1

The basic ideas for the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous came directly out of this vast correspondence. In late 1945 a good A.A. friend suggested that all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of principles which could offer tested solutions to all our problems of living and working together and of relating our society to the world outside. If we had become sure enough of where we really stood on such matters as membership, group autonomy, singleness of purpose, non-endorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy, and anonymity in its several aspects, then such a set of principles could be written. A code of traditions could not, of course, ever become rule or law. But it might act as a guide for our Trustees, Headquarters people, and especially for A.A. groups with growing pains.

page 203, paragraph 2

...you have in your principles--surrender, humility, looking above for divine guidance, day-by-day sobriety, and above all anonymity...

page 243, paragraph 1, lines 1-3

...Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

page 286, paragraph 1, lines 5 & 6

Our textbook, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, states that "anonymity is the greatest protection our society can ever have." It also says that "the spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice."

page 287, paragraph 1

They tell us that we alcoholics are the biggest rationalizers in the world, and that, fortified with the excuse that we are doing great things for A.A., we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of personal power and prestige, public honors, and money--the same implacable urges that when frustrated once caused us to drink, the same forces that are today ripping the globe apart at its seams. These lessons make clear, moreover, that enough spectacular anonymity breakers could someday carry our whole society down into that ruinous dead end with them.

Se we are certain that if such forces ever rule our Fellowship we will



perish too, just as other societies have perished throughout human history. Let us not suppose for a moment that we recovered alcoholics are so much better or stronger than other folks, or that because in twenty years nothing has ever happened to A.A. nothing ever can.

Our really great hope lies in the fact that our total experience, as alcoholics and as A.A. members, has at last taught us the immense power of these forces for self-destruction. These hard-won lessons have made us entirely willing to undertake every personal sacrifice necessary for the preservation of our treasured Fellowship.

This is why we see anonymity at the general public level as our chief protection against ourselves, the guardian of all our Traditions, and the greatest symbol of self-sacrifice that we know.

Of course no A.A. need be anonymous to family, friends, or neighbors. Disclosure there is usually right and good. Nor is there any special danger when we speak at group or semipublic A.A. meetings, provided press reports reveal first names only.

But before the general public--press, radio, films, television, book, and the like--the revelation of full names and pictures is not for us. Here the lid can and must stay down.

We now fully realize that 100 percent personal anonymity before the public is just as vital to the life of A.A. as 100 percent sobriety is to the life of each and every member. This is not the counsel of fear; it is the prudent voice of long experience.

page 292, paragraph 5 & page 293, paragraphs 1-6, lines 1-4

When it comes to survival for A.A., nothing short of our very best will be good enough.

We want to maintain 100 percent anonymity for still another potent reason, one often overlooked. Instead of securing us more publicity, repeated self-serving anonymity breaks could severely damage the wonderful relations we now enjoy with press and public alike. We could wind up with a poor press and very little public confidence.

page 293, paragraph 7, lines 7 & 8 & page 294, paragraph 1

BILL W.

Another thing they were discovering--and this was no small matter--was that drunks wanted and needed anonymity. When a poor shaking alcoholic, who was sure about nothing in his life, showed up at a meeting he did not want this fact broadcast to his neighbors, his boss; possibly he did not even want his family to know. They were also learning that anonymity worked for the group as a whole. If one of their more erratic members began boasting around town about his new-found sobriety, there was the danger that this character might slip and get drunk in public, which could play hell with their reputation and that small degree of confidence they were trying to establish with the outside world.

The whole notion of anonymity went against the grain of the Oxford Group. These were generous, loving people, and in theory their movement was democratic, nonracial, nonsectarian. In practice, however, the Oxford Group put great emphasis on finding and saving the "key men" in a community, heads of industry, etc. As a group they were oriented to high-pressure salesmanship, convinced that the only way to carry the message was through

publicity and big names.

page 262, paragraphs 1 & 2

Individual alcoholics would never need directives from any human authority--most of them understood their recovery was a case of do or die--but the groups and their troubled relationships with certain members, with other groups and with the world around them were another matter. And finding guidelines for them was not to be easy.

In the early forties, when Bill undertook this task, it seemed to him they were facing several grave issues: the financial situation, the number of breaks in anonymity that were occurring across the country and, in time the question of what would become of the fellowship if anything should happen to the handful of old

timers who were trying to mediate and solve group problems. But as the seeds of what were to grow into the Twelve Traditions were planted and gradually began to take on shape and substance--first in letters to outlying groups, then in a few short pieces Bill wrote--it became clear that he was formulating a declaration of principles that would touch on many subjects: on group autonomy, requirement for membership, on singleness of purpose and professionalism in AA.

As had been the case with the Steps and the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, each Tradition was arrived at the hard way, from lessons learned in dealing with groups and Bill's own involvement in their hassles. (For example, whenever he discussed professionalism, Bill told of his temptation to work for Towns Hospital, and how the wisdom of a group conscience had finally made him turn down the offer.) His arguments were disarming because they were based on irrefutable personal experience.

The first ten Traditions focused on the internal workings of groups, the last two on their position with respect to the outside world. Good public relations, Bill knew, would always be essential to growth; over half the membership, he figured, had originally been drawn to AA by some favorable coverage in the media. But underlying all the traditions, the very foundation out of which they grew, was the idea of anonymity.

In Bill's thinking, anonymity also seemed to fall into two parts--the practical and the spiritual. About its practical side he had no doubts. More than any may he knew, he'd been driven by a passion for personal acclaim, and whenever he spoke about breaking anonymity, his talk was peppered with incidents from his own history, especially from his conspicuous dry drunk period. Perhaps it was this that made him understand the temptation in others. Those who'd been obscure so long could now tell their stories and find instant stardom; in a way it seemed to give a hard-edged identity to the drunk's damaged sense of himself.

In the being the whole notion of being anonymous had come from fear. They felt they had to hide from public mistrust and contempt. Also, at that time, some were fearful that they wouldn't be able to handle the number of appeals for help that would come pouring in when the book was published. They needed the protection of anonymity. The newcomer needed it--no man wanted his boss, possibly not even his friends, to know he was joining a group of lowly alcoholics--and the groups needed it to protect themselves from members who might go shooting off on wild publicity binges of their own.

page 329, paragraphs 1-3 & page 330, paragraphs 1-3

There seemed never to have been gray areas of the same kind of confusions in Bill's thinking about the spiritual side of anonymity. But as with the mysterious ingredient that he knew was holding AA together, he had not fully understood it; he had not yet found a vocabulary to describe the spiritual reasons for remaining anonymous.

For one thing, he didn't know if what he was feeling applied to others, or if it was something that spoke only to him, to his condition. Still he never questioned its importance in his life. When he thought of it, but even more when he practiced it, when he was not selling, not the co-founder, but just a drunk talking to and recognizing himself in another human being, then, always, he felt himself drawing closer to some indefinable force. Then he was truly living in the now, then he had placed himself in some area of

being that was outside the clash of opposites, approval versus disapproval, past versus future.

page 332, paragraphs 4 & 5

He spoke of the many blessings that had been bestowed upon the fellowship, and said, that if he were asked which of these was most vital to AA, he'd say it was their "concept of anonymity."

page 368, paragraph 4, lines 4-7

BILL W. (MARCH 1971)

GRAPEVINE MEMORIAL ISSUE

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

page 3

DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLD TIMERS

...a teammate offered Rollie a drink. "No thanks," he said.

"What's the matter?" his buddy asked. "You afraid you'll make a damn fool of yourself?"

"Yes," Rollie replied. "So you have if for me and make a damn fool out of yourself."

When the Akron A.A.'s left the Oxford Group, Rollie stayed with T. Henry for a time. So, when the story of his alcoholism broke in 1940, credit for his recovery was given to the Oxford Group. At that time, however, Rollie broke his silence and said no, the credit for his sobriety belonged to Alcoholics Anonymous.

In addition to bringing hundreds of new members to A.A., the story was the Fellowship's first anonymity break at the national level.

page 252, paragraphs 5, lines 2 & 3 & paragraphs 6-9, lines 1-3

The Cleveland group had the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all the members," said Warren. "In fact, I remember Dr. Bob saying, 'If I got up and gave my name as Dr. Bob S., people who needed help would have a hard time getting in touch with me.'"

Warren recalled, "He [Dr. Bob] said there were two ways to break the anonymity Tradition: (1) by giving your name at the public level of press or radio; (2) by being so anonymous that you can't be reached by other drunks."

In an article in the February 1969 Grapevine, D.S. of San Mateo, California, wrote that Dr. Bob commented on the Eleventh Tradition as follows:

"Since our Tradition on anonymity designates the exact level where the line should be held, it must be obvious to everyone who can read and understand the English language that to maintain anonymity at any other level is definitely a violation of this tradition.

"The A.A. who hides his identity from his fellow A.A. by using only a given name violates the Tradition just as much as the A.A. who permits his name to appear in the press in connection with matters pertaining to A.A.

"The former is maintaining his anonymity above the level of press, radio, and films, and the latter is maintaining his anonymity below the level of press, radio, and films--whereas the Tradition states that we should maintain our anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

Ernie G. of Toledo, commenting on what he saw to be an increase of anonymity within A.A. today as compared with the old days, said, "I made a lead over to Jackson [Michigan] one night, and everybody's coming up to me and saying, 'I'm Joe,' 'I'm Pete.' Then one of the guys said, 'Safe journey home. If you get into trouble, give me a buzz.' Later, I said to the fellow who was with me, 'You know, suppose we did get into trouble on the way home. How would we tell anyone in A.A.? We don't know anyone's last name.' They get so doggoned carried away with this anonymity that it gets to be a joke. I had a book [evidently, one of the small address books compiled by early members or their wives] with the first hundred names--first and last--telephone numbers, and where they lived."

page 264, paragraph 2, lines 4-8 & paragraphs 3-7 & page 265,

paragraph 1

He said you were not supposed to break your anonymity in the newspapers or on the radio, but he didn't think we would get anyplace if people didn't know we belonged to A.A. He had the firm conviction that you should let yourself be known as an A.A. member in the community,...

page 265, paragraph 3, lines 1-6

EBBY: THE MAN WHO SPONSORED BILL W.

Although no AA Tradition governs anonymity after death, a developing custom is to respect the wishes of the surviving family members.

page xiii, paragraph 2, lines 1-3

FORTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

1994 FINAL REPORT

Anonymity is the Spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. Bill Wilson wrote

that, "The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice."

page 6, paragraph 6, lines 1-3

...If I were to have a chance to survive, I needed to comprehend and apply our most cherished and unifying principle of anonymity to my life. I was t discover that the very essence of anonymity is sacrifice, putting the needs of A.A. ahead of my own wants and desires.

page 7, paragraph 4, lines 7-11

It is extremely difficult to speak of any of the Traditions without referring to the Twelve Tradition, for it is a recapitulation of the previous eleven. In *The Language of the Heart*, Bill W., writing in a 1948 letter, tells us: "Tradition Twelve, in its mood of humble anonymity, plainly enough comprehends the preceding eleven. The Twelve Points of Traditions are little else than a specific application of the spirit of the Twelve Steps of recovery to our group life and to our relations with society in general."

page 14, paragraph 2

...definitions from our theme and Traditions.

Spirit--1) The spirit in which you do something is the attitude you show when you are doing it; 2) If you enter into the spirit of something, you take part in it in an enthusiastic way; 3) Courage and determination that helps people survive in difficult times and to keep their way of life and their beliefs; 4) A set of ideas, beliefs, and aims that is typical of people in similar circumstances.

Sacrifice--To sacrifice something that is vital or important means to give it up, often in order to obtain something for yourself or for someone else.

From the Traditions:

Tradition--A custom or belief that the people in a group or society have practiced or held for a long time. E.g.: We ought to consider briefly the history and tradition of the movement.

From Tradition Ten:

Controversy--is discussion and argument about an action or proposal that many people do not approve of.

Anonymous--If someone remains anonymous when they do something of give something their name is not revealed because they do not wish it to be.

From Tradition Eleven:

Attraction--A particular feature which makes something or someone interesting or desirable.

Promotion--A publicity campaign that is intended to increase the sales or usage of something

From Tradition Twelve:

Anonymity--is the state of not having your name or identity known, especially when you have done a particular thing. E.g.: A benefactor who

insisted on anonymity.

Spiritual--relating to peoples' deepest thoughts and beliefs, rather than to their bodies and physical surrounding; the modern world's pursuit of material ends to the neglect of its spiritual needs; your spiritual home is the place where you feel that you belong, because you have ideas and attitudes in common with the other people there.

Foundation--the foundation of foundations for something such as belief or way of life is the basic idea, attitude, or experience on which that belief or way of life is built.

Principles--A general rule that you try to obey in the way that you behave or in the way you try to achieve something; from principles come values defined as the moral principle and beliefs that people think are important in life and tend to live their lives by. E.g.: the traditional values of civility and moderation.

Personalities--is your whole character and nature; are rather rude remarks referring to a person's character or appearance. E.g.: the fight never degenerate into personalities--there is no feeling of bitterness.

page 18, paragraph 2, lines 12 & 13 & paragraphs 3-19

..."Because A.A.'s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit --well symbolized by anonymity--is the foundation of them all. It is A.A.'s proved willingness to make these sacrifices that gives people their high confidence in our future."

page 20, paragraph 1, lines 2-7

#### FORTY-FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

##### PASS IT ON -- OUR THREE LEGACIES

###### 1995 FINAL REPORT

...our Tradition Eleven says: "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."

page 25, paragraph 17, lines 11-18

#### FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

##### PRESERVING OUR FELLOWSHIP -- OUR CHALLENGE

###### 1996 FINAL REPORT

Our chief means of avoiding adverse publicity and public controversy are personal anonymity at the public level, and our Tradition of self-support.

page 14, paragraph 8, lines 1-3

...The Washingtonian Temperance Society, which had uncovered a workable

formula. After a founding in March of 1840 by six drunks at Chase Tavern in Baltimore, the group experienced a meteoric rise, recording 1,000 members before the end of that year. Abraham Lincoln addressed their Second Anniversary celebration. Their message was simple: 1) the drunkard could be rescued; he was weak, not wicked; 2) relating personal experience by a reformed drunkard was more moving and persuasive than a lecture by a well-meaning nonalcoholic; 3) the simplicity of the pledge, requiring only one thing -- personal abstinence; and 4) neutrality on the subjects of politics, religion, and distribution and sale of alcoholic beverages. Not unlike the elements in our own Preamble.

Initially, the Washingtonian movement was virtually entirely made up of reformed "sots." Later, others flocked to their meetings and took the pledge and the "fellowship of sufferers" became diluted. In spite of their stated aims, to avoid politics, etc., many members took opposing sides publicly on alcohol reform and other issues. Importantly, there was no principle of anonymity to protect the society from erring members. Within eight or nine years it was reported that the Washingtonians "had lost their thunder." At their zenith, the press reported that there were 500,000 recovered sots in the Washingtonians.

page 15, paragraph 10, lines 1-14 & page 16, paragraph 1, lines 1-10

Self-support is about money, but it's also about participation and service. It's about anonymity and our common welfare. It's about leadership and our singleness of purpose. Most of all, it's about the very essence of Alcoholics Anonymous, trying to carry this message to alcoholics, and, as the result of paying our own bills, the Fellowship will be here for all the years to come when hopeless drunks walk into A.A. meetings looking for sobriety and a new way of life.

page 22, paragraph 7, lines 5-12

The First Tradition, along with the Twelfth, defines both the basic structure and the nature of our heart. We state that the overall health of the Fellowship is not just a good idea, it is vital to our personal recovery. And then we insist that all of these Traditions are rooted in the spiritual foundation of anonymity. By reminding us to always place principles before personalities, and stressing first our common welfare, the two Traditions have served us well, and remain vitally alive.

Traditions Two, Four, Eight and Nine reflect our early experience in the Fellowship in establishing lines of authority. Tradition Two says it all in the words, "...there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience." Tradition Four establishes the authority of each group, "except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." Tradition Eight makes the point that we are non-professionals, and Tradition Nine says, "A.A., as such, ought never be organized." The common thread stitching these Traditions together, of course, is the primacy of a loving God expressing Himself in the group conscience.

page 33, paragraphs 4 & 5

Traditions Ten and Eleven speak directly of our relationship to those outside the Fellowship. Ten states we have no opinion on outside issues, so we should never be drawn into public controversy; and Eleven reminds us that our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, that we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

page 33, paragraph 10

...Traditions Ten and Eleven lead directly to Tradition Twelve and the realization that all our valued Traditions are founded on the principle and practice of anonymity.

page 33, paragraph 12, lines 1-3

#### FORTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

##### SPIRITUALLY--OUR FOUNDATION

###### 1997 FINAL REPORT

I saw the building of a foundation by first seeing the problem -- Step One. With Steps Two and Three I hired the contractor or Higher Power. Steps Four and Five cleared the ground. Steps Six through Eleven poured the walls. Step Twelve is where the spiritual foundation starts, and we try to carry the message to another alcoholic. How we do that is shown through the Twelve Traditions.

The Twelve Tradition says (long form): "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."

page 5, paragraph 5, lines 2-8 & paragraph 6

Any time I talk about unity in Alcoholics Anonymous I find myself referring back to the Twelve Traditions. The First Tradition points out clearly that my recovery depends on A.A. unity. The next six Traditions tell me about unity as it refers to my group and the rest of the Traditions explain about hitting special workers, creating boards and committees that are directly responsible to those they serve, as well as giving us directions on what are outside issues and the importance we must place on out anonymity.

page 15, paragraph 16, lines 1-8

#### FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

##### MOVING FORWARD: UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY

###### 1999 FINAL REPORT

What principles are we talking about? I believe they are in our Twelve Traditions. Tradition One's basic principle is unity. Tradition Two's basic principle is God as our ultimate authority. Tradition Three says that we include anyone who has a desire to stop drinking. Tradition Four addresses autonomy, except when A.A. as a whole is threatened. Tradition Five speaks of singleness of purpose. Tradition Six's basic principle is sticking to our primary purpose. Tradition Seven says we are self-supporting. Tradition Eight's basic principle is "Freely you have received, freely give." In Tradition Nine the basic principle is be responsible in service. Tradition Ten addresses the principle that there is no controversy at the public level. Tradition Eleven talks about attraction rather than promotion. And lastly, in Tradition Twelve the principle is humility expressed through anonymity.



page 19, paragraph 6

"We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have."

page 20, paragraph 8, lines 7-9

"Our new book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, states that 'anonymity is the greatest protection our Society can ever have.' It says also that 'spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice.'.... At the beginning we sacrificed alcohol. We had to, or it would have killed us. But we couldn't get rid of alcohol unless we made other sacrifices. Big-shotism and phony thinking had to go. We had to toss self-justification, self-pity, and anger right out the window. We had to quit the crazy contest for personal prestige and big bank balances. We had to take personal responsibility for our sorry state and quit blaming others for it."

page 20, paragraph 9, lines 2-11

### GRATEFUL THOUGHTS

The principle ingredient of ANONYMITY is devoting ones efforts for the common good, without personal desires.

See God in someone else or you will never see Him in yourself.

Patience attains all things "IF" we but wait.

It pays to shake hands with a few people on the way up. We may have to pass them on the way down.

page 9, paragraphs 7,11,12, & 14

### GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN THERE

In A.A.'s infancy, the main value of anonymity was to ensure protection of the newcomer. As Bill once explained, "Because of the stigma of alcoholism, most alcoholics wanted to be anonymous." When the earliest members emerged bravely from the protection mantle of the Oxford Group, they sought another protective mantle, namely that of being anonymous.

There were other reasons for anonymity in the early days of the Fellowship. What if an alcoholic who had openly proclaimed his membership went out and got drunk in public? That would destroy confidence in the new movement. And, practically speaking, there was the fear of being overwhelmed by more pleas and help and requests for information than they could possibly handle. Soon it was realized that the mantle of anonymity fostered and preserved the one-to-one peer relationship between well-known members and those "newly arrived" at group meetings.

As the membership grew and anonymity breaks increased in the late forties, it dawned on A.A. that anonymity served a much deeper spiritual purpose. It prevented the egos of the members from driving them to run after money, fame, and power at A.A.'s expense. It fostered personal sacrifice for the benefit of A.A. rather than self, and it came to be described as the firm base upon which A.A. stands.

page 45, paragraphs 2-4

...it was also felt that there is such a thing as being too anonymous.

Most members are known to each other only by their first names, but those who, through misunderstanding or just plain preference, withhold their identity completely even at the private level, may be denying help to the suffering alcoholic who needs it. After all, there has to be a means of reaching each other.

Bill felt very strongly about anonymity. He spoke about it at every opportunity right up until and including what A.A. members know as "Bill's Last Message" in the fall of 1970, just before his death. He best summed up his views, I think, at the St. Louis Convention in 1955, when he said: The entire future of our fellowship hangs upon this principle. If we continue to be filled with the spirit and practice of anonymity, no shoal or reef can wreck us. If we forget this principle, he lid to Pandora's box will be off and the spirits of Money, Power and Prestige will be loosed among us...No A.A. principle merits more study and application than this one. I am positive that A.A.'s anonymity is the key to longtime survival.

page 47, paragraph 1, lines 1-7 & paragraph 2

#### LOIS REMEMBERS

Bill recognized that, although the individual AA had the Twelve Steps to guide him, the groups needed some sort of framework within which they could operate. The ordinary rules and regulations that held other societies together would not apply. Aas would not accept them. In addition to the question of relationship with outside agencies, there were problems of unity, ultimate authority, membership singleness of purpose, effect of one group's actions on another, money in all its aspects, public relations and anonymity.

As Bill, guided by his long experience, helped groups work out their problems, he saw certain principles evolving. He began to assemble them into what became the Twelve Traditions.

page 146, paragraphs 1 & 2

Through constant correspondence Bill noticed that when AA principles were applied, group problems could be solved as they arose or could be prevented from coming into being. He also recognized that certain actions almost invariably led to trouble.

page 147, paragraph 2

...there seems to be a trend in certain areas toward an excess of anonymity even within the Fellowships. Al-Anon's Eleventh Tradition states:

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

Nothing is said about maintaining anonymity within our group, our family and our circle of friends. Let us not mistake anonymity for secrecy.

The degree of anonymity we practice is a personal matter. Most of us, I believe, do not wish to be anonymous within our own Fellowships. Anonymity here hinders our availability to help our fellow members.

Also, if AA and Al-Anon groups do not let the public know of our presence, perhaps by announcing the time and place know of our presence, perhaps by announcing the time and place of meetings in local newspapers or by some other means, we block ourselves off from those in need.

The stigma of alcoholism still is strong. I believe it to be one of the responsibilities of our Fellowship to try to remove this stigma. To act as if AA and Al-Anon were secret societies only increases the idea of shame.

If we sincerely believe alcoholism to be an illness, just an diabetes is an illness, we can more easily convince others and break down their resistance to an admission of having the disease or of living with one who has it. How can we blame the public for its belief that alcoholism is a moral weakness if we seem to believe it ourselves?

page 194, paragraph 3, lines 1-3 & paragraphs 4-9

#### NOT-GOD

...Bill Wilson's presentation on that occasion on his understanding of the relationship between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Oxford Group is offered at length in his own words:

The Oxford Groupers had clearly shown us what to do. And just as importantly, we had also learned from them what to do as far as alcoholics were concerned. We had found that certain of their ideas and attitudes simply could not be sold alcoholics. For example, drinkers would not take pressure in any form, excepting f from John Barleycorn himself. They always had to be led, not pushed. They would not stand for the rather aggressive evangelism of the Oxford Group. And they would not accept the principle of "team guidance" for their own personal lives. It was too authoritarian for them. In other respects, too, we found we had to make haste slowly. When first contacted, most alcoholics just wanted to find sobriety, nothing else. They clung to their own defects, letting go only little by little. They simply, did not want to get "too good too soon." The Oxford Groups' absolute concepts...were frequently too much for the drunks. These ideas had to be fed with teaspoons rather than by buckets.

Besides, the Oxford Group' "absolutes" were expressions peculiar to them. This was a terminology which might continue to identify us in the public mind with the Oxford Groupers, ever though we had completely withdrawn from their fellowship.

There was yet another difficulty.. Because of the stigma then attached to the condition, most alcoholics wanted to be anonymous. We were afraid also of developing erratic public characters who thought broken anonymity, might get drunk in public and destroy confidence in us. The Oxford Group, on the contrary, depended very much upon the use of prominent names--something that doubtless all right for them but mighty hazardous for us. Our debt to them, nevertheless, was and is immense, and so the final breakaway was very painful.

page 46, paragraph 3, lines 2-5 & subparagraphs 1-3

...Alcoholics Anonymous steadfastly and consistently rejected absolutes, avoided aggressive evangelism, embraced anonymity, and strove to a void offending anyone who might need its program.

Wilson's deepest problem with the Oxford Group concerned that movement's famous "Four Absolutes." A.A.'s co-founder pointed out that "the principle of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love are as much a goal of A.A. members and are as much practiced by them as by any other group of people, yet we found that when the word absolute was put in front of these attributes, they either turned people away by the hundreds or gave a temporary spiritual inflation resulting in collapse. The average alcoholic

just couldn't stand the pace and got nowhere."

This explicit rejection of any claim even to an aim that was absolute became more significant to Alcoholics Anonymous than anything it derived more positively from the Oxford Group.

The early and newly sober alcoholics felt discomfort with "the principles of aggressive evangelism so prominent as an Oxford Group attitude." Their early experience revealed to the New York alcoholics "that this principle, which may have been absolutely vital to the success of the Oxford Group, would seldom touch neurotics of our hue." The problem was twofold. Drinking alcoholics did not respond well to an aggressively evangelistic approach; and sober alcoholics who still held jobs justly feared the consequences of being publicized as "alcoholics." The promise of anonymity removed one obstacle which might have led prospects to fear even investigating the program.

page 50, paragraph 2, lines 1-4 & page 51, paragraphs 1-3

Perhaps because of the very confusion over how each group got started, the early Clevelanders found it useful to rotate leadership--even for the simple functions of selecting speakers, choosing discussion topics, and putting those who requested information or help in touch with currently active members. Six months became the usual term on a committee, one of whose members dropped off and was replaced each month, and membership on which was determined only by seniority within the group. Everyone thus had an equal opportunity to hold office, the criterion being sobriety rather than the popularity rewarded by election. Responsibility to the program became more important than pleasing any individual, faction, or group: no one could be kept either in or out of this modest and shared role. And insofar as the sobriety of all was deemed due to faithful practice of the A.A. program, the program received first loyalty. Thus the ideals of "trusted servants" and "principles before personalities" became enshrined and safeguarded in practice.

Again several factors--some peculiar to the Cleveland situation of the early 1940's, and others inherent although latent at the time in Alcoholics Anonymous--combined to produce the unique A.A. phenomenon of "sponsorship." The factors peculiar to Cleveland were rapid numerical increase, brisk fission into new groups, the divergent understandings of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous that arose from differing attitudes to anonymity, and the member's differing attitudes to Oxford Group ideas and principles. The core A.A. ideas mediated from latency into practical expression were the importance of "identification" as the main, if not the sole route, to "getting the program"; the deep sense that "this simple program" could be "gotten by anybody," but that the "anybodies" concerned were very different in accidental ways; and a profound awareness concerning sobriety that "you keep it only by giving it away," an especially impelling conviction of the need for "working with others."

And so, "sponsorship" came into practice. The official Alcoholics Anonymous pamphlet entitled Sponsorship began in typical A.A. style: "What Is Sponsorship?" a question answered by an historical narration of Bill Wilson's contacts with Ebby T. and Dr. Bob Smith in 1934-1935. Only after this story was an analytical description of sponsorship offered. "Essentially, the process of sponsorship is this: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A."

page 88, paragraph 2 & page 89, paragraphs 1 & 2

If there was one absolute rigidity in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, it was the admonition to its adherents, "Don't drink." This absolute statement sprang from the concept of what it meant to be an alcoholic. If there was one absolute rigidity in the fellowship, it was contained in the second word of its name--Anonymous. This principle was founded upon two-faceted experience. The first was of the need for protection, both of the individual alcoholic himself from economic sanction and of the fellowship from the possible failing of its members. When later experience revealed that these concerns need not always be relevant or even that, in certain circumstances, they might yield to other considerations for the good of A.A. or of the individual alcoholic, still further experience revealed a second and deeper reason for anonymity. As "grandiosity" came to be understood as the greatest danger to all alcoholics, drunk or sober, willing acceptance of the limitations imposed by anonymity came by experience to be seen as the surest witness, especially to self, of "true sobriety."

page 104, paragraph 3

As the membership increased, so proportionately grew the correspondence directed to the New York City office. Most of the letters requested literature or information about other local anonymous alcoholics, but many also contained questions of procedure practice, and on occasion, theory. Doggedly, Wilson devoted hours on end to answering these queries: "If I understand correctly, your problem sounds similar to...On that occasion, these good people, now years sober, tried...Of course, it is for you and your group to work this out: I can only relate to you what we seem to have learned from past experience. Perhaps you and your group will choose to follow this, but whether you do or not, please let us know how it comes out."

The "Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous" emerged directly from this correspondence. By 1945, some of the questions had become noticeably repetitious, which suggested that "all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of principles which could offer tested solutions to all our problems of living and working together and of relating our society to the world outside." Such matters as "membership, group autonomy, singleness of purpose, non-endorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy, and anonymity in its several aspects" certainly seemed settled by consistent--and at times painful--experience. Yet Wilson hesitated. He feared loss of the personal touch that also added to his own and A.A.'s larger reservoir of experience. Slowly, however, writer's cramp, the scantness of staff assistance, and the repetitive nature of some concerns won out. Stressing that "a code of traditions could not, of course, ever become rule or law [,] but might serve as a guide for our Trustees, Headquarters people, and especially for groups with growing pains," Wilson first published "Twelve Suggested Points for A.A. Tradition" in the fellowship's recently inaugurated journal, The A.A. Grapevine, in April of 1946.

This first publication was in a "long form." Its text was soon reduced, more closely and memorably to parallel the precisely two hundred words of the Twelve Steps which comprised the constitution of the A.A. program.

page 113, paragraph 1,2 & 3, lines 1-4

Alcoholics Anonymous by its very name promised anonymity. A common reminder was often spoken at the end of meetings. "This has been a typical meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. We remind you that we are `Alcoholics

Anonymous,' and ask that you remember from tonight what you have heard and not whom you have seen."

page 146, paragraph 3, lines 1-5

The prime witness of the name "Alcoholics Anonymous" lay in its declaration of weakness and limitation. An "alcoholic" was one who could not control his or her drinking, and anonymity served as an effective reminder of the vulnerability of this condition. This very proclamation of weakness, the source of the fellowship's only but glorious "success," demonstrated as first truth that strength comes from weakness, ability from impotence, identity from limitation.

page 150, paragraph 4

..after a member's death anonymity need be observed only if that was the member's expressed wish and his family's continuing desire.

page 252, paragraph 3, lines 5-7

In one sense, the greatest threat to A.A.'s tradition of anonymity derives from the fellowship's own success.

page 278, paragraph 3, lines 1 & 2

Delegates to the 1974 General Service Conference suggested, "At A.A. meeting [tape recordings] should not be made without permission of the people speaking," recommending further that tapes made at meetings be lent or offered to groups outside A.A. "only if the individuals whose speeches are recorded have also protected their anonymity by using first names only." Because videotapes do not afford the same opportunity, the visual equivalent of "first name only," their use has been seen as a violation of anonymity and therefore not accepted.

The question of taping recalled to attention an issue thought to be earlier settled--the matter of anonymity within the A.A. fellowship. One 1971 General Service Conference workshop had warned against its increase, suggesting that within Alcoholics Anonymous the use of full names not only did not violate anonymity but instead enabled effective communication.

page 279, paragraph 1, lines 5-13 & paragraph 2, lines 1-6

..."Anonymity was first conceived for A.A. as a mere protection;...

page 344, (58), paragraph 2, line 4

#### PASS IT ON

There were several reasons for Bill's 1937 departure from the Oxford Group. He had a growing conviction that alcoholics need to work with their own kind, a view he would continue to hold for the rest of his life. He himself had received his help from the "small intimate group" services of the Oxford Group, a concept they were about to abandon. Out in Akron, where Dr. Bob and the others stayed in the Oxford Group until 1939, the intimacy of the small group meeting continued at the T. Henry Williams home.

Because Bill's reasons were often misunderstood, he later wrote letters and articles to explain the split. One of his most extensive statements about the situation was made in a letter dated October 30, 1940, to a member in Richmond, Virginia:

"I am always glad to say privately that some of the Oxford Group presentation and emphasis upon the Christian message saved my life. Yet it is equally true that other attitudes of the O.G. nearly got me drunk again, and we long since discovered that if we were to approach alcoholics successfully, these [attitudes] would have to be abandoned. Recovery being a life-or-death matter for most alcoholics, it became a question of adopting that which would work and rejecting that which would not.

For example:

"1. The principle of aggressive evangelism so prominent as an Oxford Group attitude had to be dropped in order to get any result with alcoholics. Experience showed that this principle, which may have been absolutely vital to the success of the Oxford Group, would seldom touch neurotics of our hue.

"2. Excessive personal publicity or prominence in the work was found to be bad. Alcoholics who talked too much on public platforms were likely to become inflated and get drunk again. Our principle of anonymity, so far as the general public is concerned, partly corrects this difficulty.

"3. The principles of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love are much a goal for A.A. members and are as much practiced by them as by any other group of people; yet we found that when the word 'absolute' was put in front of these attributes, they either turned people away by the hundreds or gave a temporary spiritual inflation resulting in collapse.

"4. It was discovered that all forms of coercion, both direct and indirect, had to be dropped. We found that 'checking' in the hands of amateurs too often resulted in criticism, and that resulted in resentment, which is probably the most serious problem the average alcoholic is troubled with.

"5. While most of us believe profoundly in the principle of 'guidance,' it was soon apparent that to receive it accurately, considerable spiritual preparation was necessary.

"6. We found that the principles of tolerance and love had to be much more emphasized in their actual practice than they were in the O.G., especially tolerance. We had to become much more inclusive and never, if possible, exclusive. We can never say to anyone (or insinuate) that he must agree to our formula or be excommunicated. The atheist may stand up in an A.A. meeting denying God, yet reporting how he has been helped in other ways. Experience tells us he will presently change his mind, but nobody tells him he must do so.

"7. In order to carry the principle of inclusiveness and tolerance still further, we make no religious requirement of anyone. All people having an alcohol problem who wish to get rid of it and make a happy adjustment with the circumstances of their lives, become A.A. members by simply associating with us. Nothing but sincerity is asked of anyone. In this atmosphere, the orthodox, the unorthodox, and the unbeliever mix happily and usefully together, and in nearly every case great spiritual growth ensues.

"8. Were we to make any religious demands upon people, I'm afraid many Catholics would feel they could not be interested. As matters now stand, I suppose A.A. is 25 percent Catholic, and [Catholic members] find that our suggestions do not conflict in any way with their own beliefs or rules or religious conduct. Since there are plenty of alcoholic Catholics, why deprive them of their chance by being dogmatic, when experience shows that is entirely unnecessary.

"Finally, I am often asked why I do not publicly acknowledge my very real debt of gratitude to the Oxford Group. The answer is that, unfortunately, a vast and sometimes unreasoning prejudice exists all over this country against the O.G. and its successor M.R.A. My dilemma is that if I make such an acknowledgment, I may establish a connection between the O.G. and Alcoholics Anonymous which does not exist at the present time. I had to ask myself which was the more important: that the O.G. receive credit and that I have the pleasure of so discharging my debt and gratitude, or that alcoholics everywhere have the best possible chance to stay alive regardless of who gets credit."

page 171, paragraphs 3-5, page 172 & page 173, paragraphs 1-3

In May, in A.A.'s first anonymity break at the national level, Rollie H., catcher (he had just caught a no-hit game pitched by Bob Feller) for the Cleveland Indians, revealed that he had been sober in A.A. for a year.

page 236, paragraph 4, lines 2-6

For two or three years I guess I was A.A.'s number one anonymity breaker...

page 237, paragraph 4, lines 7 & 8

The Grapevine, A.A.'s monthly periodical, had commenced publication with the June 1944 issue. Originated independently of Bill, it was founded by a group that he affectionately termed "six ink-stained wretches." An eight-page bulletin at the start, intended to get A.A. news to members in the armed forces, it soon expanded and became the Fellowship's official magazine. Over the years, the Grapevine would publish about 100 pieces by Bill. It was one of his most important vehicles for communication with the membership.

Much of Bill's work at the office was taking care of the correspondence. Since the publication of the Saturday Evening Post article, mail had been arriving in a steady stream. Many of the letters asked for assistance in forming new groups, or requested advice on various problems and circumstances in the groups. It was from having seen similar questions arise again and again that the idea of devising clear guidelines for the groups first evolved. This need had been discussed since 1943, when the headquarters office began to collect information, requesting of the groups a list of their membership rules and requirements. Listing them, Bill recalled, took a great many sheets of paper. "A little reflection on these many rules brought us to an astonishing conclusion. If all these edicts had been in force everywhere at once, it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined A.A. About nine-tenths of our oldest and best members could never have got by!

Bill described the problem as it existed in mid-decade:

"The solution of group problems by correspondence had put a large volume of work on Headquarters. Letters to metropolitan A.A. centers filled our bulging files. It seemed as if every contestant in every group argument wrote us during this confused period.

"The basic ideas for the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous came directly out of this vast correspondence. In late 1945 a good A.A. friend suggested that all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of principles which could offer tested solutions to all of our problems of living and working together and of relating our Society to the world



outside. If we had become sure enough of where we really stood on such matters as membership, group autonomy, singleness of purpose, non-endorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy, and anonymity in its several aspects, then such a set of principles could be written."

It was testament to Bill's genius that he thought to call them Traditions. Had they been called "laws," "rules," "by-laws," or "regulations," they might never have been accepted by the membership. Bill knew his fellow alcoholics well; he knew that no self-respecting drunk, sober or otherwise, would willingly submit to a body of "law"--much too authoritarian.

The name "Traditions," however, would come a bit later. At first, he dubbed them, "Twelve Points to Assure Our Future," because he saw them as guidelines necessary to the survival, unity, and effectiveness of the Fellowship. Under that title, they were first published in the April 1946 issue of the Grapevine. In subsequent issues, Bill wrote an editorial for each point, explaining its origin and why it was necessary.

As Bill set about his task, it became obvious that some of the Traditions were already in place. That made them truly traditional, inasmuch as their practice within the Fellowship was already customary.

To say that Bill was the sole author of the Traditions is both true and untrue. He was certainly not the sole author of the experiences from which they evolved, but he was the person who interpreted and culled meaning from these experiences. The meanings, as derived by Bill, subsequently became the backbone of the Traditions.

The best-known (if not, at the time, the most secure)--in terms of its importance and also in terms of the publicity it had already received--was the tradition of anonymity. The term had been appropriated when the Big Book was named; prior to that the Fellowship had been a "nameless bunch of drunks," not secret in terms of the work it did--that had never been secret--but in terms of who belonged to it. "Alcoholics Anonymous" had always referred to the members, never to the message, which Bill had been trying to pass on since his spiritual awakening.

Anonymity was originally practiced for reasons that had to do with the experimental nature of the Society and with the prevailing stigma on alcoholism. To make public one's A.A. membership and then to go out and drink again was to jeopardize the reputation and ultimately the survival of the entire Fellowship. Anonymity at the level of the public media was vital to the welfare of the group. This attitude would be one of the major determinants of the Eleventh Tradition: "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."

The anonymity break by Rollie H. caused Bill to examine his own feelings, and in the process of so doing, he realized the greater significance of the anonymity principle. For Bill's own response to Rollie's "transgression" was to seek out publicity for himself. Bill then concluded that the deeper purpose of anonymity as "actually to keep those fool egos of ours from running hog wild after money and public fame at A.A.'s expense."

Early on, Bill realized that the limelight--something that most A.A. members, himself included, craved--was an experience that most had little tolerance for. To lose one's bid for the limelight could be as disastrous as to win it. Power-driving was a potentially dangerous activity for an

alcoholic; Bill said he believed it to be the source and cause of all his own troubles...It was much better, then, to rely on principles and ideas, which were constant, stable, and dependable, than on the unstable and quixotic ups and downs of personal relationships. Thus was born the Twelve Tradition: "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

page 305, paragraphs 1-5 & pages 306 & 307

..."The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because A.A.'s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit--well symbolized by anonymity--is the foundation of them all. It is A.A.'s proved willingness to make these sacrifices that gives people their high confidence in our future.

These are sophisticated concepts, and it took a mind like Bill's to distill them.

page 308 paragraph 1, lines 2-7 & paragraph 2, lines 1 & 2

...The tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous--our only means of self-government--entreats each member to avoid all that particular kind of personal publicity or distinction which might link his name with our Society in the general public mind. A.A.'s Tradition Twelve reads as follows: 'Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.'

page 312, paragraph 1, lines 1-7

...the Traditions evolved from Bill's personal experience and the experience of the Fellowship, as well as from the mistakes made by earlier institutions and movements, the history of which Bill had studied. But not so many A.A.'s are aware that Bill did not use every experience relayed by the groups, nor did he always use the group conscience as his guide. He was selective, using only those experiences that went to the heart of A.A. problems. Since his desire was always the best interest of A.A., his so-called manipulations always worked for the good of the Fellowship. (As he put it, "My personal life may not be exemplary, but I have never made a mistake about A.A.")

A case in point is that of the co-founders' royalties from the sale of the Big Book. Had Bill listened to the group conscience at the time the book was published, it would not have been sold at all, but given away. But in this matter, Bill overrode the group conscience, insisting that the book be offered for sale. In a letter written some years later, he explains his reasoning in light of subsequent events:

"Our history proves that the sometimes idealistic majority of that day was seriously mistaken. Had there been no book earnings for the Headquarters and no royalties for Dr. Bob and me, A.A. would have taken a very different and probably disastrous course. Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia could not have looked at those 5,000 drunks in the hospital pioneering at Akron. I would have had to quit full-time work 15 years ago. There could have been no Twelve Traditions and no General Service Conference. Financially crippled, the Headquarters could not have spread A.A. around the world; indeed, it might have folded up completely. Lacking close attention, our public relations would certainly have gone haywire. Anonymity at the public level, our greatest single protection, would have evaporated. Consequently, our unity would have been lost."

Tradition Eight solved, once and for all, the difficult issue of Bill's own position in the Fellowship, and the income he derived from A.A. It had taken ten years to work it out. The group's conscience, plus the experience of writing the Big Book, plus his and Dr. Bob's other A.A. labors, were the precedents for Tradition Eight: "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but out service centers may employ special workers." Bill was without a doubt in this regard a "special worker."

Bill this to say about "paid missionaries," and why he didn't want them: "Now, it is an undoubted fact that professionalism in spiritual matters has too often limited the spread of real understanding and practical application. The modern world has little time for paid emissaries of God, notwithstanding a deep yearning for the Rock of Ages."

Bill, more than anyone, deserved to be paid for the unique service, he rendered the Fellowship. The book royalties he received were not payment for Twelve Step work; they were payment for special services; but the money nonetheless freed his time to do the Twelve Step work that he unceasingly did. Tradition Eight also made acceptable the proper compensation, in years to come, of other special workers. A.A. was becoming an institution, as well as a publisher of its own literature.

Functional and important lessons were culled from the aftertaste, bitter and sweet, of experience.

page 322, paragraphs 7-9 & page 323

#### THAT AMAZING GRACE

I've never had any anonymity. If I had followed that path, we would never have had any A.A. Somebody had to be out in front and have a first name and a last name and a mailing address and a post office box and a listed telephone. Neither Dr. Bob nor I saw the necessity for such anonymity. They'd never had any in Oxford Group.

page 17, paragraph 6, lines 5-10

Like Dr. Bob, Clarence did not view the Twelve Traditions with favor--particularly the Eleventh Tradition pertaining to anonymity. Clarence always pointed out that he simply shared his own experience, strength, and hope in the A.A. Fellowship, and that anonymity was not a part of that experience. He frequently commented that anyone in A.A. could remain anonymous if they wanted to and that many did want to remain anonymous in order to keep their jobs secure. He pointed out that in the A.A. of the 1930's, jobs were scarce and that many employers would have nothing to do with those who identified themselves as alcoholics or members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Clarence pointed to another reason for anonymity. Some of the early Aas were lawyers, physicians, and bankers who were concerned that they might be pestered by the many hundreds who were pouring into A.A. in those days and might demand an undue amount of time from those whose names and addresses they could find. By contrast, both Dr. Bob and Clarence used their full names with much frequency because they wanted to be available to those who needed help.

page 18, paragraph 1

#### THE A.A. SERVICE MANUAL

Finding the right answers to all our public relations puzzlers has been a long process. After much trial and error, sometimes punctuated by painful mistakes, the attitudes and practices that would work best for us

emerged. The important ones can today be seen in our A.A. Traditions. One hundred percent anonymity at the public level, no use of the A.A. name for the benefit of other causes, however worthy, no endorsements or alliances, one single purpose for Alcoholics Anonymous, no professionalism, public relations by the principle of attraction rather than promotion--those were some of the hard-learned lessons.

page S14, paragraph 3

It was chiefly from correspondence and from our mounting public relations activity that the basic ideas for our Traditions came. In late 1945, a good A.A. friend suggested that all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of general principles, simply stated principles that could offer tested solutions to all of A.A.'s problems of living and working together and of relating our Society to the world outside.

If we had become sure enough of where we stood on such matters as membership, group autonomy, singleness of purpose, non-endorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy, and anonymity in its several aspects, then such a code of principals could be written. Such a traditional code could not, of course, ever become rule or law. But it could act as a sure guide for our trustees, for headquarters people and, most especially, for A.A. groups with bad growing pains.

Being at the center of things, we of the headquarters would have to do the job. Aided by my helpers there, I set to work. The Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous that resulted were first published in the so-called long form in the Grapevine of May, 1946.

page S14, paragraph 7 & page S15, paragraph 1 & 2, lines 1-4

An A.A. group consists of two or more alcoholics who gather together for meetings on a regular basis. These meetings are the basic source of recovery for the alcoholic who wants to stop drinking.

As a group, they are fully self-supporting, have no outside affiliations, and no opinions outside issues. Because A.A.'s public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, the group members maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV and film.

The Long Form of Tradition Three and a section of Warranty six, Concept aptly describe what an A.A. group is:

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."

Warrant Six:..."much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which A.A. Traditions accord to the individual member and to his group: no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to A.A. principles; no fees or dues to levied--voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from A.A.--membership always to be the choice of the individual; each A.A. group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes--it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves and A.A. group provided that, as a group, they have on other purpose or affiliation."

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Inc., not has but one purpose, that of serving the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is in effect an agency created and now designated by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to maintain services for those who should be seeking, through Alcoholics Anonymous, the means for arresting the disease of alcoholism through the application to their own lives in whole or in part, of the Twelve Steps which constitute the recovery program upon which the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is founded. These Twelve Steps are as follows:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (hereinafter referred to as either "General Service Board" or the "Board") claims no proprietary right in the recovery program, for these Twelve Steps, as all spiritual truths, may now be regarded as available to all mankind. However, because these Twelve Steps have proven to constitute an effective spiritual basis for life which, if followed, arrests the disease of alcoholism, the General Service Board asserts the negative right of preventing, so far as it may within its power so to do, any modification, alteration, or extension of these Twelve Steps, except at the instance of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in keeping with the Charter of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous as the same may from time to time be amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Charter").

Members of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous are hereinafter referred to as "Conference delegates."

The General Service Board its deliberations and decisions shall be guided by the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, hereinafter referred to as the "Traditions," which are as follows:

...the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, hereinafter referred to as the "Traditions," which are as follows:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on A.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. 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.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. 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.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The General Service Board shall use its best efforts to insure that these Twelve Traditions are maintained, for it is regarded by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as the custodian of these Traditions and, accordingly, it shall not itself nor, so far as it is within its power so to do, permit others to modify, alter, or amplify these Traditions, except in keeping with the provisions of the Charter.

The General Service Board also shall be guided by the spirit of the Twelve Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous, hereinafter referred to as the 'Concepts' which, in their short form, are as follows:

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

2. The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A.--the Conference, the General Service Board and its Service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives--with a traditional 'Right of Decision'.

4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional 'Right of Participation', allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

5. Throughout our structure, a traditional 'Right of Appeal' ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustees members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

8. The trustees are the principle planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

9. Good service leadership at levels is indispensable for future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

10. Every service responsibly should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

page S107, paragraph 2-page S109

#### THE HOME GROUP: HEARTBEAT OF AA

What do we talk about when we take a newcomer to a meeting? We sure

don't talk recovery program! Can you visualize a newcomer sitting, shaking, worried, fearful in the front seat of the car riding to his first meeting?

The AA sponsor announces, "We're going to help you recover from your alcoholism with this Twelve Step program. First, you'll admit you're powerless. Then, you'll surrender to God, take a moral inventory, and confess your faults."

The newcomer fumbles for the door handle. "Surrender to God? Confess my faults? Are you people some kind of religious nuts? Let me out of here!"

No, the AA sponsor talks soothingly about things like anonymity, no dues to pay, no bosses in AA, no affiliation with outside groups, no membership requirement except a desire to stop drinking -- all to make our newcomer feel comfortable and

protected. We talk Traditions to our people in AA long before we broach the sensitive subject in the Steps.

page 87, paragraphs 3-6

Maintaining anonymity insures that the focus of our efforts is on the program and not the personalities.

page 126, paragraph 2

#### THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Once we became sure that our feet were set on the right track, we decided upon a book in which we could tell other alcoholics the good news. As the book took form we inscribed in it the essence of our experience. It was product of thousands of hours of discussion. It truly represented the collective voice, heart, and conscience of those of us who had pioneered the first four years of AA.

As the day of publication approached we racked our brains to find a suitable name for the volume. We must have considered at least two hundred titles. Thinking up titles and voting upon them at meetings became one of our main activities. A great welter of discussion and argument finally narrowed our choice to a single pair of names. Should we call our new book The Way Out or should we call it Alcoholics Anonymous? That was the final question. A last-minute vote was taken by the Akron and New York groups. By a narrow majority the verdict was for naming our book The Way Out. Just before we went to print someone suggested there might be other books having the same title. One of our early Lone Members (dear old Fitz M., who then lived in Washington) went over to the Library of Congress to investigate. He found exactly twelve books already titled The Way Out. When this information was passed around, we shivered at the possibility of being the "thirteenth Way Out." So Alcoholics Anonymous became first choice. That's how we got a name for our book of experience, a name for our movement and, as we are now beginning to see, a Tradition of the greatest spiritual import. God does move in mysterious ways his wonders to perform!

In the book Alcoholics Anonymous there are only three references to the principle of anonymity. The foreword of our first edition states: "Being mostly business or professional folk some of us could not carry on our occupations if known" and "When writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, we urge each of our fellowship to omit his personal name, designating himself instead as 'a member of Alcoholics Anonymous,'" and then, "very earnestly we ask the press also to observe this request for



otherwise we shall be greatly handicapped."

page 13, paragraph 2, lines 6-11, paragraph 3 & page 14,

paragraph 1

Anonymity is already a cornerstone of our public relations policy.

page 13, paragraph 1, line 11

Of course it should be the privilege, even the right, of each individual or group to handle anonymity as they wish. But to do that intelligently we shall need to be convinced that the principle is a good one for practically all of us; indeed we must realize that the future safety and effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous may depend upon its preservation. Each individual will then have to decide where he ought to draw the line--how far he ought to carry the principle in his own affairs, how far he may go in dropping his own anonymity without injury to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

The vital question is: Just where shall we fix this point where personalities fade out and anonymity begins?

As a matter of fact, few of us are anonymous so far as our daily contacts go. We have dropped anonymity at this level because we think our friends and associates ought to know about Alcoholics Anonymous and what it has done for us. We also wish to lose the fear of admitting that we are alcoholics. Though we earnestly request reporters not to disclose our identities, we frequently speak before semipublic gatherings under our right names. We wish to impress audiences that our alcoholism is a sickness we no longer fear to discuss before anyone. So far, so good. If, however, we venture beyond this limit we shall surely lose the principle of anonymity forever. If every AA felt free to publish his own name, picture, and story we would soon be launched upon a vast orgy of personal publicity which obviously could have no limit whatever. Isn't this where, by the strongest kind of attraction, we must draw the line?

If I were asked to outline a Tradition for anonymity it might run as follows:

1. It should be the privilege of each individual AA to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow Aas should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.
2. Conversely, the individual AA ought to respect the feeling of his local group as to anonymity. If his group wishes to be more anonymous than he does, he ought to go along with them until they change their views.
3. With very rare exceptions it ought to be a national Tradition that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish his name or picture (in connection with his Alcoholics Anonymous activities) in any medium of public circulation, or by radio. Of course, this should not restrict the free use of his name in other public activities, provided he does not disclose his AA connection.

page 15, paragraphs 2-7 & page 16, paragraph 1

...anonymity has, for us AA's, an immense spiritual significance...

page 16, paragraph 6, lines 2 & 3

1. It should be the privilege of each AA to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow Aas should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.

2. Conversely, the individual AA ought to respect the feeling of his local group as to anonymity. If the group wishes to be less conspicuous in their locality than he does, he ought to go along with them until they change their views.

3. With very rare exceptions, it ought to be a national policy that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish in connection with an AA activity his name or picture in media of public circulation. This would not, however, restrict the use of his name in other public activities provided, of course, he does not disclose his AA membership.

page 17, paragraphs 1-3

...I believe most of us would agree that the general idea of anonymity is sound, because it encourages alcoholics and the families of alcoholics to approach us for help. Still fearful of being stigmatized, they regard our anonymity as an assurance their problems will be kept confidential, that the alcoholic skeleton in the family closet will not wander in the streets.

Second, the policy of anonymity is a protection to our cause. It prevents our founders or leaders, so called, from becoming household names who might at any time get drunk and give AA a black eye.

page 17, paragraph 6, lines 1-6 & paragraph 7, lines 1-3

Fourth, why does the general public regard us so favorably? Is it simply because we are bringing recovery to lots of alcoholics? No, this can hardly be the whole story. However impressed he may be by our recoveries, John Q. Public is even more interested in our way of life. Weary of pressure selling, spectacular promotion, and shouting public characters, he is refreshed by our quietness, modesty, and anonymity. It may well be that he feels a great spiritual power is being generated on this account--that something new has come into his own life.

page 18, paragraph 1

In a spiritual sense, anonymity amounts to the renunciation of personal prestige as an instrument of national policy.

page 18, paragraph 2, lines 3-5

Since we advertise anonymity to every newcomer, we ought, of course, to preserve a new member's anonymity so long as he wishes it preserved. Because, when he read our publicity and came to us, we contracted to do exactly that. And even if he wants to come in under an assumed name, we should assure him he can. If wishes us to refrain from discussing his case with anyone, even other AA members, we ought to respect that wish too. While most newcomers do not care a rap who knows about their alcoholism, there are others who care very much. Let us guard them in every way until they get over that feeling.

Then come the problem of the newcomer who wishes to drop his anonymity too fast. He rushes to all his friends with the glad news of AA. If his group does not caution him he may rush to a newspaper office or a microphone to tell the wide world all about himself. He is also likely to tell everyone the innermost details of his personal life, soon to find that, in this respect, he has altogether too much publicity! We ought to suggest to

him that he take things easy; that he first get on his own feet before talking about AA to all and sundry; that no one thinks of publicizing AA without being sure of the approval of his own group.

page 18, paragraph 3, lines 1-10 & paragraph 4

In most places, but not all, it is customary for Aas to use their own names when speaking before public or semipublic gathering. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters are present they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program. This preserves the principle of anonymity so far as the general public is concerned and at the same time represents us as a group of alcoholics who no longer fear to let our friends know that we have been very sick people.

In practice, then, the principle of anonymity seems to come down to this: With one very important exception, the question of how far each individual or group shall go in dropping anonymity is left strictly to the individual or group concerned. The exception is: that all groups or individuals, when writing or speaking for publication as members of Alcoholics Anonymous, feel bound never to disclose their true names. Except for very cases, it is at this point of publication that nearly all of us feel we should draw the anonymity line. We ought not disclose ourselves to the general public.

page 19, paragraphs 2 & 3

Great modesty and humility are needed by every AA for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to AA as a whole. This principle of anonymity before the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attributes forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction and seldom, if ever, upon promotion.

page 20, paragraph 1

Our experience has taught us that:

1. Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But the individual welfare follows close afterward.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience.
3. Our membership ought to include all who suffer alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group.
4. With respect to its own affairs, each AA 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 AA as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation [now the General Service Board]. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.
5. 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.

An AA group may cooperate with anyone, but should bind itself to no one.

Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

...personal Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.

All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in AA are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion.

...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 truly humble modesty.

page 22, paragraphs 1-6, & 7, lines 12,13, paragraph 8, lines 8-10, page 23, paragraph 1, line 6, paragraph 2, lines 12-14, paragraph 4, lines 3,4 & paragraph 5, lines 1-4

...it is a fact that most of us do follow, in our personal lives, the Twelve suggested Steps to recovery. But we do this from choice. We prefer recovery to death. Then, little by little, we perceive that the spiritual basis of life is best. We conform because we want to.

Likewise, most AA groups become willing to follow the "Twelve Points of Tradition to Assure Our Future," The groups are willing to avoid controversy over outside issues such as politics, reform, or religion; they stick to their single purpose of helping alcoholics to recover; they increasingly rely on self-support rather than outside charity. More and more do they insist on modesty and anonymity in their public relations. The AA groups follow these other traditional principles for the very same reason that the individual AA follows the Twelve Steps to recovery. Groups see they would disintegrate if they didn't and they soon discover that adherence to our Tradition and experience is the foundation for a happier and more effective group life.

Nowhere in AA is there to be seen any constituted human authority that can compel an AA group to do anything. Some AA groups, for example, elect their leaders. But even with such a mandate, each leader soon discovers that while he can always guide by example or persuasion he can never boss, else at election time he may find himself passed by.

The majority of AA groups do not even choose leaders. They prefer rotating committees to handle their simple affairs. These committees are invariably regarded as servants; they have only the authorization to serve, never to command. Each committee carries out what it believes to be the wishes of its group. That is all.

page 40, paragraph 4, lines 1-4, paragraph 2 & page 41,

paragraph 1 & 2, lines 1-5

Though we are Aas, and AA must come first, we are also citizens of the

world. Besides, we are, like our good friends the physicians, honor-bound to share what we know with all.

Therefore, it seems to me that some of us must heed the call from other fields. And those who do, need only remember first and last they are Aas; that in their new activities they are individuals only. This means that they will respect the principles of anonymity in the press; that if they do appear before the general public they will not describe themselves as Aas; that they will refrain from emphasizing their AA status in appeals for money or publicity.

page 44, paragraph 5, lines 7-9 & page 45, paragraph 1

...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.

page 70, paragraph 4, lines 1-4

May we never forget that we live by the grace of God--on borrowed time; that anonymity is better than acclaim; that for us as a movement poverty is better than wealth.

And may we reflect with ever deepening conviction, that we shall never be at our best except when we hew only to the primary

spiritual aim of AA. That of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers alcoholism.

page 83, paragraph 2, lines 1-4 & paragraph 3

One may say that anonymity is the spiritual base, the sure key to all the rest of our Traditions. It has come to stand for prudence and, most importantly, for self-effacement. True consideration for the newcomer if he desires to be nameless; vital protection against misuse of the name Alcoholics Anonymous at the public level; and to each of us a constant reminder that principles come before personal interest--such is the wide scope of this all-embracing principle. In it we see the cornerstone of our security as a movement; at a deeper spiritual level it points us to still greater self-renunciation.

A glance at the Twelve Traditions will instantly assure anyone that "giving up" is the essential idea of them all. In each Tradition, the individual or the group is asked to give up something for our general welfare. Tradition One asks us to place the common good ahead of personal desire. Tradition Two asks us to listen to God as he may speak in the group conscience. Tradition Three requires that we exclude no alcoholic from AA membership. Tradition Four implies that we abandon all idea of centralized human authority or government. But each group is enjoined to consult widely in matters affecting us all. Tradition Five restricts the AA group to a single purpose, carrying our message to other alcoholics.

Tradition Six points at the corroding influence of money, property, and personal authority; it begs that we keep these influences at a minimum by separate incorporation and management of our special services. It also warns against the natural temptation to make alliances or give endorsements. Tradition Seven states that we had best pay our own bills; that large contributions or those carrying obligations ought not be received; that public solicitation using the name Alcoholics Anonymous is positively dangerous. Tradition Eight forswears professionalizing our Twelve Step work but it does guarantee our few paid service workers an unquestioned amateur

status. Tradition Nine asks that we give up all idea of expensive organization; enough is needed to permit effective work by our special services--and no more. This Tradition breathes democracy; our leadership is one of service and it is rotating; our few titles never clothe their holders with arbitrary personal authority; they hold authorizations to serve, never to govern. Tradition Ten is an emphatic restraint of serious controversy; it implores each of us to take care against committing AA to the fires of reform, political or religious dissension. Tradition Eleven asks, in our public relations, that we be alert against sensationalism and it declares there is never need to praise ourselves. 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 AA to other causes.

Tradition Twelve, in its mood of humble anonymity, plainly enough comprehends the preceding eleven. The Twelve Points of Traditions are little else than a specific application of the spirit of the Twelve Steps of recovery to our group life and to our relations with society in general. The recovery steps would make each individual AA 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.

Our AA Traditions are, we trust, securely anchored in those wise precepts: charity, gratitude, and humility. Nor have we forgotten prudence. May these virtues ever stand clear before us in our meditations; may Alcoholics Anonymous serve God in happy unison for so long as he may need us.

pages 93 & 94, paragraph 1

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous are a distillate of our experience of living and working together. They apply the spirit of Twelve recovery Steps to our group life and security. They deal with our relations with the world outside and with each other; they state our attitudes toward power and prestige, toward property and money. They would save us from tempting alliances and major controversies; they would elevate principles far above personal ambitions. And as a token of this last, they request that we maintain personal anonymity before the open public as a

protection to AA and as proof of the fact that our Society intends to practice true humility.

page 96, paragraph 1

I had thought myself the author of the text until I discovered I was just the umpire of the differences of opinion. After endless voting on a title for the new work, we had decided to call it The Way Out. But inquiry by Fitz M., our Maryland alcoholic, at the Library of Congress disclosed the fact that twelve books already bore that title. Surely we couldn't make our book the thirteenth. So we named it Alcoholics Anonymous instead! Through we didn't know it, our movement then got its name--a name which because of the implication of humility and modesty has given us our treasured spiritual principle of anonymity.

page 107, paragraph 1, lines 5-14

"That, touching all matters affecting AA unity, our common welfare should come first; that AA has no human authority--only God as he may speak in our group conscience; that our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern; that any alcoholic may become an AA member if he says so--we exclude no one; that every AA group may manage its own affairs as it likes,

provided surrounding groups are not harmed thereby; that we AA's have but a single aim, the carrying of our message to the alcoholic who still suffers; that in consequence we cannot finance, endorse, or otherwise lend the name 'Alcoholics Anonymous' to any other enterprise, however worthy; that AA, as such, ought to remain poor, lest problems of property, management, and money divert us from our sole aim; that we ought to be self-supporting, gladly paying our small expenses ourselves; that AA should remain forever nonprofessional, ordinary Twelve Step work never to be paid for; that, as a Fellowship, we should never be organized but may nevertheless create responsible service boards or committees to insure us better propagation and sponsorship and that these agencies may engage full-time workers for special tasks; that our public relations ought to proceed upon the principle of attraction rather promotion, it being better to let our friends recommend us; that personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and pictures ought to be strictly maintained as our best protection against the temptations of power or personal ambition; and finally, that anonymity before the general public is the spiritual key to all our Traditions, ever reminding us we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This is 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."

page 121, paragraph 1

Finding the right answers to all these public relations puzzlers has been a long process. After much trial and error, sometimes punctuated by painful mistakes, the attitudes and practices that would work best for us emerged. The important ones can today be seen in the AA Traditions. One hundred percent anonymity at the public level, no use of the AA name for the benefit of other causes however worthy, no endorsements or alliances, one single purpose for Alcoholics Anonymous, no professionalism, public relations by the principle of attraction rather than promotion--these were some of the hard-learned lessons.

page 151, paragraph 4

It was chiefly from this correspondence, and from our mounting public relations activity, that the basic ideas for the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous came. In late 1945, a good AA friend suggested that all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of general principles: principles simply stated which could offer tested solutions to all of AA's problems of living and working together and of relating our Society to the world outside. If we had become sure enough of where we stood on such matters as membership, group autonomy, singleness of purpose, non-endorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy, and anonymity in its several aspects, then such a code of principles could be written. Such a traditional code could not, of course, ever become rule or law. But it could act as a sure guide for our trustee, Headquarters people and, most especially, for AA groups with bad growing pains. Being at the center of things, we of the Headquarters would have to do the job. Aided by my helpers there, I set to work. The Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous which resulted were first published in the so-called "long form" in the AA Grapevine of April 1946

page 154, paragraph 3, lines 1-17

... we explained the "why" of our anonymity--that we dare not allow "big shot-ism" to get going among us...

page 182, paragraph 3, lines 4 & 5

Victory has been gained through surrender, fame achieved through

anonymity...

page 206, paragraph 7, lines 1 & 2

...The Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous--our only means of self-government--entreats each member to avoid all that particular kind of personal publicity or distinction which might link his name with our Society in the general public mind. AA's Tradition Twelve reads as follows: "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

page 207, paragraph 1, lines 1-6

The Tradition of personal anonymity and no honors at the public level is our protective shield. We dare not meet the power temptation naked.

page 207, paragraph 4

Then came AA. We faced about and found ourselves on a new high road where the direction signs said never a word about power, fame, or wealth. The new signs read, "This way to sanity and serenity--the price is self-sacrifice."

Our new book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, states that "anonymity is the greatest protection our Society can ever have." It says also that "spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice."

Let's turn to AA's twenty years of experience and see how we arrived at that belief, now expressed in our Traditions Eleven and Twelve.

At the beginning we sacrificed alcohol. We had to, or it would have killed us. But we couldn't get rid of alcohol unless we made other sacrifices. Big-shotism and phony thinking had to go. We had to toss self-justification, self-pity, and anger right out the window. We had to quit the crazy contest for personal prestige and big bank balances. We had to take personal responsibility for our sorry state and quit blaming others for it.

Were these sacrifices? Yes, they were. To gain enough humility and self-respect to stay alive at all we had to give up what had really been our dearest possession--our ambitions and our illegitimate pride.

But even this was not enough. Sacrifice had to go much further. Other people had to benefit too. So we took on some Twelve Step work; we began to carry the AA message. We sacrificed time, energy, and our own money to do this. We couldn't keep what we had unless we gave it away.

Did we demand that our new prospects give us anything? Were we asking them for power over their lives, for fame for our good work, or for a cent of their money? No, we were not. We found that if we demanded any of these things our Twelve Step work went flat. So these natural desires had to be sacrificed; otherwise, our prospects received little or no sobriety. Nor, indeed, did we.

Thus we learned that sacrifice had to bring a double benefit, or else little at all. We began to know about the kind of giving of ourselves that had no price tag on it.

When the first AA group took form, we soon learned a lot more of this. We found that each of us had to make willing sacrifices for the group itself, sacrifices for the common welfare. The group, in turn, found that



it had to give up many of its own rights for the protection and welfare of each member, and for AA as a whole. These sacrifices had to be made or AA couldn't continue to exist.

Out of these experiences and realizations, the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous began to take shape and substance.

Gradually we saw that the unity, the effectiveness--yes, even the survival--of AA would always depend upon our continued willingness to sacrifice our personal ambitions and desires for the common safety and welfare. Just as sacrifice meant survival for the individual, so did sacrifice mean unity and survival for the group and for AA's entire Fellowship.

Viewed in this light, AA's Twelve Traditions are little else than a list of sacrifices which the experience of twenty years has taught us that we must make, individually and collectively, if AA itself is to stay alive and healthy.

In our Twelve Traditions we have set our faces against nearly every trend in the outside world.

We have denied ourselves personal government, professionalism, and the right to say who our members shall be. We have abandoned do-goodism, reform, and paternalism. We refuse charitable money and prefer to pay our own way. We will cooperate with practically everybody, yet we decline to marry our Society to anyone. We abstain from public controversy and will not quarrel among ourselves about those things that so rip society asunder--religion, politics, and reform. We have but one purpose: to carry the AA message to the sick alcoholic who wants it.

We take these attitudes not at all because we claim special virtue or wisdom; we do these things because hard experience has told us that we must--if AA is to survive in the distraught world of today. We also give up rights and make sacrifices because we ought to--and, better yet, because we want to. AA is a power greater than any of us; it must go on living or else uncounted thousands of our kind will surely die. This we know.

page 210, paragraph 2, lines 4-7, paragraphs 3-10 & page 211, paragraphs 1-6

The old files at AA Headquarters reveal many scores of such experiences with broken anonymity. Most of them point up the same lessons.

They tell us we alcoholics are the biggest rationalizers in the world; that fortified with the excuse we are doing great things

for AA we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of personal power and prestige, public honors, and money--the same implacable urges that when frustrated once caused us to drink; the same forces that are today ripping the globe apart at its seams. Moreover, they make clear that enough spectacular anonymity breakers could someday carry out whole Society down into that ruinous dead end with them.

So we are certain that if such forces ever rule our Fellowship, we will perish too, just as other societies have perished throughout human history. Let us not suppose for a moment that we recovered alcoholics are so much better or stronger than other folks; or that because in twenty years nothing has ever happened to AA, nothing ever can.

Our really great hope lies in the fact that our total experience, as

alcoholics and as AA members has at last taught us the immense power of these forces for self-destruction. These hard-won lessons have made us entirely willing to undertake every personal sacrifice necessary for the preservation of our treasured Fellowship.

This is why we see anonymity at the general public level as our chief protection against ourselves, the guardian of all our Traditions, and the greatest symbol of self-sacrifice that we know.

Of course, no AA need be anonymous to family, friends, or neighbors. Disclosure there is usually right and good. Nor is there any special danger when we speak at group or semi-public AA meetings, provided press reports reveal first names only.

But before the general public--press, radio, films, television, and the like--the revelation of full names and pictures is the point of peril. This is the main escape hatch for the fearful destructive forces that still lie latent in us all. Here the lid can and must stay down.

We now fully realize that 100 percent personal anonymity before the public is just as vital to the life of AA as 100 percent sobriety is to the life of each and every member. This is not the counsel of fear; it is the prudent voice of long experience.

page 215, paragraphs 6 & 7 & page 216, paragraphs 1-6 lines 1-4

Thus I learned that the temporary or seeming good can often be the deadly enemy of the permanent best. When it comes to survival for AA, nothing short of our very best will be good enough.

We want to maintain 100 percent anonymity for still another potent reason, one often overlooked. Instead of securing us more publicity, repeated self-serving anonymity breaks could severely damage the wonderful relation we now enjoy with press and public alike. We could wind up with a poor press and little public confidence at all.

For many years, news channels all over the world have showered AA with enthusiastic publicity, a never ending stream of it, far out of proportion to the news values involved. Editors tell us why this is. They give us extra space and time because their confidence in AA is complete. The very foundation of that high confidence is, they say, our continual insistence on personal anonymity at the press level.

Never before had news outlets and public relations experts heard of a society that absolutely refused personally to advertise its leaders or members. To them, this strange and refreshing novelty has always been proof positive that AA is on the square, that nobody has an angle.

This, they tell us, is the prime reason for their goodwill. This is why, in season and out, they continue to carry the AA message of recovery to the whole world.

If, through enough anonymity lapses, we finally caused the press, the public, and our alcoholic prospects themselves to wonder about our motives, we'd surely lose this priceless asset; and, along with it, countless prospective members. Alcoholics Anonymous would not then be getting more good publicity; it would be getting less and worse. Therefore the handwriting on the wall is clear. Because most of us can already see it, and because the rest of us soon will, I'm fully confident that no such dark day will ever fall upon our Society.

page 216, paragraph 7, lines 5-8 & page 217, paragraphs 1-5

...as individuals, we can carry the AA experience and ideas into any outside field whatever, provided that we guard anonymity and refuse to use the AA name for money-raising or publicity purposes.

page 225, paragraph 1, lines 1-4

In AA, the group has strict limitations, but the individual has scarcely any. Remembering to observe the Traditions of anonymity and non-endorsement, the AA member can carry AA's message into every troubled area of this very troubled world.

page 225, paragraph 8

Let's now examine that vital Tradition Eleven. It deals with our public relations. Here is our greatest channel of communication to the alcoholic who still suffers. Tradition Eleven reads: "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." Since this great Tradition describes the most important application of AA's principle of anonymity, and because it sets the pitch and tone of our entire public relations policy,...

page 319, paragraph 2, lines 1-8

..."anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

This principle, and its enormous implications, touches every aspect of our lives. Anonymity is humility at work.

page 320, paragraph 2, lines 1-3 & paragraph 3, lines 1 & 2

The spirit of anonymity calls upon each of us for personal sacrifice in every level of our Fellowship's undertakings.

page 320, paragraph 3, lines 4 & 5