

# The Update

*This is a member to member publication.  
The viewpoints expressed here do not represent AA as a whole.*

D I S T R I C T 1 4

## Step 7 Humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- Step 7
- Tradition 7
- Birthdays

The Seventh Step is where we make the change in our attitude which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God. The whole emphasis of Step Seven is on humility. It is really saying to us that we ought to be willing to try humility in seeking the removal of our shortcomings just as we did when we admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, and came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. If that degree of humility could enable us to find the grace by which such a deadly

obsession could be banished, then there must be hope of the same result respecting any other problem we could possibly have.

- *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 76

**7th Step Prayer**

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

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AA Christmas greeting, from Bill W. 1944.  
TO ALL MEMBERS  
Greetings On Our 10th Christmas 1944



Yes, it's in the air! The spirit of Christmas once more warms this poor distraught world. Over the whole globe millions are looking forward to that one day when strife can be forgotten, when it will be remembered that all human beings, even the least are loved by God, when men will hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace as they never hoped before. But there is another world which is not poor. Neither is it distraught. It is the world of Alcoholics Anonymous, where thousands dwell happily and secure. Secure because each of us, in his own way, knows a greater power who is love, who is just, and who can be trusted.

Nor can men and women of AA ever forget that only through suffering did they find enough humility to enter the portals of that New World. How privileged we are to understand so well the divine paradox

that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection; that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth. Knowing it's full worth and purpose, we can no longer fear adversity, we have found prosperity where there was poverty, peace and joy have sprung out of the very midst of chaos. Great indeed, our blessings! And so,-- Merry Christmas to you all-- from the Trustees, from Bobbie and from Lois and me.

Bill Wilson

*Lois W., wife of AA's co-founder, Bill W., recalls the time in AA when there were few members and no Big Book.*

In the early days of AA things were really different. For five years there was no Big Book. The only way to communicate with other people was to go and tell them, so that's what we did. Of course, all of the meetings were held in people's homes, the homes of those who were lucky enough to have them. Anybody who had one made it wide open to whomever the boys brought in. Our houses, Dr. Bob's in Akron and ours in Brooklyn, were just filled with drunks, either drinking, or stopped temporarily, or well on the way to real sobriety.

Yes, AA was quite different in those days for many reasons. One was that there were no people in AA except those who had gone to the very bottom. Only these would listen to the story that one drunk was telling another. When AA first started, before there was a book, it was more anonymous than it is now, because even the Fellowship was without a name. AA didn't have a name until the book was written. Before that it was just a bunch of drunks trying to help each other, a bunch of nameless drunks. They had to be worked with over and over; families and everybody did what they could to help.

There were many, many sad things that happened, many very humorous things, and inspirational things, too.

Several are coming to mind right now. Bill, as you know, came from Vermont and someone sent him some maple syrup from there. It came in a whiskey bottle. One of the boys saw this attractive container in the kitchen and he was so drunk at the time that he gulped the whole bottle of syrup, thinking it was whiskey.

We had a rule that no one could come into the house when he was drinking. One night one of the boys came home drunk. We wouldn't let him in so he pried open the coal chute and slid into the cellar. Since he was very fat it was surprising that he could slide down it, yet somehow he made it. But this same fat man did get stuck one night in the washtubs. He lived in the basement apartment. Old city houses used to have stationary tubs in the kitchen. He thought he'd try to take a bath in one. But after getting in he couldn't get out so one of us (and I think it was I) had to pull him out.

There were many other things... a man committed suicide in our house after having pawned our dress clothes, left over from more prosperous days. These included Bill's dress suit and my precious evening cape. We have never owned such articles again.

AA was always thrilling. The families were included in all of the meetings; wives and parents (there weren't many alcoholic women then), and the children came too. The children were vitally interested in everything that went on. They would inquire about all the members and want to know how they were. They'd learn the Twelve Steps and really try to live by them. I don't think youngsters can be too young to be thrilled by the AA program and be helped by it.

One of the first women who came in was the ex-wife of a friend of Bill's. She had been in Bellevue and had come from there to our house. At that time there was a wonderful man - I think he was the fourth or fifth AA - who was trying to start a group in Washington, D.C. This woman went down to help him and she stayed sober for quite a long time. Then she married a man they were trying to bring onto the program. He really didn't go along with the idea himself and used to say to her every once in a while, "Florence, you look so thirsty." And so she did something about that, Florence disappeared. Everybody looked for her everywhere and couldn't find her. After a couple of weeks they found her in the morgue.

At that time each group used to visit every other group. New York members would go to New Jersey or Greenwich, Philadelphia or

Washington or even Cleveland or Akron. Those were the groups I recall were in existence in the first five years.

If anybody had a car a bunch of us would pile in and we'd go wherever we knew there was a meeting. Families were just as much a part of AA as the alcoholics and we did feel we belonged.

But after a while the AA's thought that they should have an occasional meeting - at least one every week - of just alcoholics so that they could really get down to business. When this occurred the wives thought they'd meet together, too, at the same time. At first these little gatherings of wives didn't have any particular purpose. Sometimes we'd play bridge and sometimes we'd gossip about our husbands.

Then a few of us began to see that we really needed the AA program just as much as the alcoholics. The famous case of my throwing a shoe at Bill started me wondering about myself and realizing that I needed to live by the Twelve Steps just as much as he did. He was getting way ahead of me. I always thought of myself as being the moral mentor in the house, but Bill, who never was a mentor, was certainly growing spiritually while I was standing still. Or perhaps there is no standing still - if I wasn't going ahead, I must be going backwards.

I decided I'd better live by the Twelve Steps. Annie S. and a number of other people had come to the same conclusion. So, whenever we visited another group, we would tell the wives and families how we found that we, too, needed to live by the Twelve Steps of AA. Little groups of wives and families all over the country began to feel the same need for something to help overcome their frustrations and help them become integrated human beings again.

That's the way Al-Anon started. We followed the AA program in every principle. I want to thank AA's so very much for showing us the way. Without your leading us we would still be the unhappy folks we were.

In our meetings we tell our own experiences just as AA's do. We tell how we came to find that we needed Al-Anon and what Al-Anon has done for us. And we seek to help other families that were, or are, having the same sort of experience.

In 1950 Bill traveled all over Canada and the United States to see how AA's would react to the idea of a general conference for Alcoholics Anonymous, and in doing so he discovered quite a few types of groups of the family of alcoholics. He thought that they should have a Central Office here in New York, just as AA did, so that they could be unified in their use of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions - a place where inquiries could be received, literature prepared and the public informed so that those in need would know where to turn.

A good friend and I started a small office in Bedford Hills. By then AA had had eighty-seven inquiries from wives or groups who wished to register. As AA was not equipped to handle the families of alcoholics it handed over this list to us and we wrote to them. Fifty groups responded and were registered with us. That was in '51. Today (1967) there are over 3,000 Al-Anon groups. The numerical potential of Al-Anon is greater than AA's because it is composed not only of mates of alcoholics, but children, parents and other relatives and friends. It is estimated that five people are seriously affected by one alcoholic.

Though we have barely scratched the surface, the future is bright, thanks to you AA's for your wonderful example and inspiration.

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Note From The Editor

THANK YOU!!!!

I want to thank all the Groups in District 14 for their support and participation in the Newsletter over the past 2 years. It has been an honour and privilege to Serve District 14 as Newsletter/ Website Chair. I know that the new person coming on will do a wonderful job with the newsletter. I wish each and everyone of you the best sober holidays and a fabulous New year.

Yours in Love and Service

Pam V.

Tradition 7

Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

**Tradition 7 Checklist**

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a bar-room?
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize

- AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

Things Groups Need to do for the incoming Newsletter/ Website Chair

- Send them your group birthdays
- Pay for your subscriptions: \$15.00 10 issues  
\$7.50 5 issues
- Send your announcements to them
- Keep them up-to-date on your group status
- Send in your articles and jokes for them to publish

**Please have all of this for the January GSR Meeting**



Tradition 7

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

Live and Let Live

## AA Christmas Carol

Uptight before Christmas, all  
through these rooms  
alcoholics were stricken with  
holiday gloom.  
They prayed, "Santa, please make  
us happy, joyous &  
free, bring us candy and presents  
and serenity."

Greed filled their minds and envy  
their hearts and  
someone said, "It's time for the  
meeting to start!"

"Does anyone have a topic for  
discussion tonight?"

Every face in the place turned  
wintery white!

They lost all self-seeking, self-  
pity and self-will  
when down through the chimney  
came the ghost of St. Bill!

He chuckled and said as he sat  
himself down

"Call the White House and tell'em  
there's a new Dubya in town."

Then he looked through a big  
book and said with a tear,

"Wow! No one rewrote this after  
all these years!

Clean house, help your neighbor,  
be loving and kind,

and don't take the first drink one  
day at a time.

How could a message as simple  
as this  
be realized, analyzed and intellec-  
tually dismissed?

here lies the reason this ghost has  
arrived:

to re-give a gift that has saved all  
your lives!"

Then he set up a big screen and a  
DVD

so every lost soul in the meeting

could see.

He played a movie of drunks at  
their best and their worst,  
what is and what was, when  
blessed and cursed.

There were scenes of a housewife  
passed out at a bar,  
a respectable businessman wreck-  
ing his car,  
a fight in a kitchen, a fight in bed,  
a fight  
at a reception between newly-  
weds.

An empty bottle, a desperate man  
alone in

a motel with a gun in his hands.

He puts down the gun and picks

up the phone

and whimpers and blubbers,

"Honey, let me come home."

She hangs up as she tells him,

"Don't call here anymore."

He reaches for the phone book

and falls to the floor.

Somehow that phone book seems  
to capture his gaze:

it's open to a number under the

"A"s.

Then all of the people in the

movie converged

on the poor side of town in the

basement of a church.

Driven together in a willing herd

to hear of hope and deliver the  
word.

The ghost of Bill W. turned off  
the TV and said,  
"The first word of the first step is  
'we'.

I suggest you start there and see  
where you go.

Be thorough and fearless, and  
please-take it slow!

Let faith set the tone, let love  
make the mood

and as for a topic...how about  
'gratitude?'

Just don't drink, go to meetings  
and pray

and be glad you're alive and sober  
today.

Be a good woman, be a good man  
and be of service whenever you  
can.

Be a good mother, be a good dad  
and try to be good to your kids  
even when they're bad.

Be a good husband, be a good  
wife...

Merry Christmas to all, and to all  
a good life!"

Posted by Mary C.



## **A Word from District 14 Out Going DCM Mary B.**

To all the members of AA in Sarnia Lambton:

I would like to take this time to thank you for all that you have given me during my time as DCM. I am not sure at this time where my journey is going to take me, continuing in service work at the Area level or at my group but everything that I have learned over my time as DCM will be used to continue my growth in the program. While I am getting ready to move on I have been sorting through paperwork and I found a small card that reminded me of the acceptance paragraphs from the Big Book:

Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation - some fact of my life - unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation, as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake.

Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes. (From the Big Book 3<sup>rd</sup> edition pg 449 or 4<sup>th</sup> edition pg 417)

I have not always been able to accept life on life's terms but you have given me the opportunity to learn more about me and to be able to take these teachings into the rest of my journey in recovery and into life itself and I want to thank you for that, to remind myself that we are all on a journey of life and where ever that journey takes us we will learn and grow.

I wish all of you many, many more days of sobriety, and of course doing it just one day at a time

because that is all we ever have.

There are not enough words to express my love and gratitude to all of those who have been a part of this journey, and I thank you. For all of you have touched me in some way or another and just know that I do appreciate all that everyone does for AA Sarnia-Lambton whether it be making the coffee to being on the district committee- you are all important and are all needed to make sure the doors of AA stay open and the meetings are there for those still suffering alcoholics. Always remember not all the still suffering alcoholics are the ones who have not made it through our doors but could be one of those long timers, short timers or in betweeners who are suffering today. Give yourself a pat on the back because all the meetings that I have visited- AA is alive and well.

Thank you for your time and for my sobriety and life

Yours in Love and Service

Mary B

DCM District 14 Sarnia Lambton



## Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new AAs. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol. (From the *Box 459* Holiday Issue, 2003.)



**1** Line up extra AA activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



**2** Be host to AA friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



**3** Keep your AA telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an AA.



**4** Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



**5** Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



**6** If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an AA with you, keep some candy handy.



**7** Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



**8** Worship in your own way.



**9** Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



**10** Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember—"one day at a time."



**11** Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



**12** "Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

# BIRTHDAYS

December 2011

<u>Name</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Group</u>
Joe C	Dec 1	2007	HighNoon
Tammy	Dec 1	2001	Lambton Central
Lee B	Dec 2	1990	Hill St Blues
Jim L	Dec 3	1988	New Beginnings
Geraldine W.	Dec 9	2009	Freedom Group
Mark C.	Dec 14	2001	St Peters Group
Justin N	Dec 15	2009	Beginner Reflections
Arnold Z	Dec 20	2009	Hill St Blues
Nichol A	Dec 22	2008	New Beginnings
Daphne G	Dec 22	1987	North End
Len S	Dec 26	1993	Sunday Morning Group
John F	Dec 26	1988	Hill St Blues
John S	Dec 28	2001	Hill St Blues
Jan P	Dec 30	2007	Beginner Reflections

January 2012

<u>Name</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Group</u>
Al L	Jan 1	2009	Hill St Blues
Kevin B	Jan 1	2001	Freedom Group
Alan B	Jan 3	2006	Beginners Reflection
Steve G	Jan 4	1985	Hill St Blues
Christina S	Jan 4	2010	Freedom Group
Maggie D	Jan 4	2007	Murphy Road
Andy I	Jan 5	2007	Hill St Blues
Mike	Jan 10	2010	Theford Workshop
Rob R	Jan 10	2010	Sunday Morning
Sandra P.	Jan 13	1989	Sunday Morning
Jim C	Jan 13	2008	Sunday Morning
Cliff H	Jan 18	2007	Sunday Morning
Mary B	Jan 25	1991	Forest Lakeside
Jack M	Jan 25	1984	Hill St Blues

# **Announcements**

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**Nov 29 2011**

**Big Bob**

**Celebrating 30 years**

**Theford**

**Pot Luck @ 6:30 speaker @8:00pm**

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**Dec 1 2011**

**Tammy**

**Celebrating 10 Years**

**Lambton Central Petrolia Thursday 8pm**

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**Dec 2 2011**

**Friday Night Open**

**Will be at High Park United Church**

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**Spirit of Christmas**

**Opens —Dec 24 2011 @6:00pm**

**Closes——Dec 25 2011 @6:00pm**

**Volunteers Needed**

**Please contact Eric**

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**Spirit Of New Years**

**Opens —— Dec 31 2011 6:00 pm**

**Closes ——Jan 1 2012 @2:00 pm**

**Volunteers Needed**

**Please contact Eric**