



The Road

(...as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny)



Volume 1, Issue 9

York Area Intergroup

March 2004

STEP THREE

Anonymous

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

Step Three, sounds easy and in some respects it is easy. What is this step suggesting we do? The first three words tell us what to do- make a decision. A decision is made in our heads. We make a conscious choice. To make an informed decision we need to know our choices. Referring to the Big Book we can find a choice: read pages 60-61 starting with the fourth paragraph. In summary you read about an alcoholic that has tried to control the entire show. A person that is running on self will. This is our first possible choice: self will. I know from my own personal experience I tried this for most of my life with dismal results. O.K. now and again things would go my way but it was always a case of winning the battle but losing the war. A second choice would be to let another person guide us and tell us what to do. I don't know many alcoholics that are willing to let another person (even a normal one) do all the thinking for them. Therefore this is not even a consideration for intelligent alcoholics like most of us. The third choice is to let God take over. I'm talking about a God that is greater than us or any other person. A God that is a Super super action hero.

Step three is asking us to make a decision. Pick one; choice #1. self will, #2. someone else's will or #3. God's will. Remember we are intelligent alcoholics so think about this before making a decision. I like to make a balance sheet and look at the pluses and minuses. Giving up my will means a radical change in my life so lets look at this very closely. On the left side of a piece of paper I list all the positive things I get from drinking. On the right side of the paper I list all the negative things I have gotten from drinking.

Cont'd on page 2, see **STEP THREE**

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Anonymous

One of the things we notice when we first come to A.A. is the slogans, and we think, "Isn't that cute !", and we feel smugly superior. Eventually, we get over it and come to recognize that everything about A.A. is designed to teach us the things we don't know. Because we are so screwed up, we usually need some very basic stuff, like "First Things First".

Alcoholism is a disease of the emotions, so we were jerked around by our emotions and made our decisions based on our emotions. We usually did the wrong thing as a result. "First Things First" is a reminder for us to practice the process of setting priorities by what we believe is more important, not by what we feel. The more we practice, the better we get.

After a period of time we develop the habit of doing what is right to do, and we start to forget about "First Things First". At that point, quite often we start to become influenced by "Do The Next Right Thing". A habit of prioritizing becomes pretty much automatic, and so we run out of First Things and start looking around for something else to do.

Cont'd on p. 2, see **FIRST THINGS**

EVENTS CALENDAR

March 3: Intergroup Meeting 7PM

(meets 1st Tue. each month)
Otterbein UM 301 W Phila. St.

March 14: Area 59 Meeting Location & Time TBA

March 20: Bilingual Share-day Reamstown Firehall

For info call Nate (717) 235-3779

March 21: DIST. 45 WORKSHOP 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM

"Going to Any Length—To What Length Will YOU Go?"

Come hear speakers, participate in the panel discussion, and play a round of Stump-A-Drunk.

UAW Hall, Gillespie Drive, York

March 24: District 45 Meeting 7PM

Covenant Moravian (meets 4th Tue. each month)

901 Cape Horn Rd.

June 6: MINI ASSEMBLY 9AM

"Singleness of Purpose"

Location TBA

Host: Area 36- Harrisburg Area Dauphin & Cumberland counties

August 8: Intergroup PICNIC 11AM-5PM

Ruffed Grouse Pavilion

Rocky Ridge County Park

REMEMBERING EDDIE Anonymous

Eddie passed away in the first half of January. He died sober after seventeen years in this fellowship. As some of us like to say, he beat this disease. Eddie was buried in the place where he grew up and a week or so later a memorial service was held for him here in York, Pennsylvania where he had lived and worked for most of the time he was sober. The service was well attended by friends and family. People from work and AA were well represented. It was a very moving ceremony for me due to its almost total lack of ceremony. His father spoke, as did his ex-wife. His friend and supervisor from work paid an emotional tribute.

Several AA friends also talked about the Eddie I remember. Eddie the good AA, the guy who played piano at the annual spiritual retreat where I got to know him best. Eddie had been a social worker and several of the people he worked with spoke with a very special reverence for how he had played such an important part in their lives. In short, those who knew and loved Eddie simply shared what he meant to them.

Continued on page 2, see **EDDIE**

STEP THREE *continued from page 1*

Do I get enough pleasure from drinking to offset the misery of the hangover and embarrassment of myself and family? After making the balance sheet I should have an intelligent analysis in front of me. Making a decision is really a question of willingness. How willing am I to believe in a God that is bigger than me? How willing am I to put my life in the hands of someone I did not trust and might even have resentment toward (because of all the horrible things that happen to me)? Step three is asking us to surrender our will and our life to God. We have already surrendered alcohol (Step 1) now we must surrender again. Read the promises; we have much to gain by making the best decision here.

So if you choose #3, meaning you are going to recognize that God is in control what are you turning over to Him? What is my will? My will is my thinking; it is what motivates me; it is my desires. What is my life? My life is my actions I take as a result of my will. Before I started working AA's 12 steps all my actions were done to benefit me. I still do plenty of self centered things I'm not a saint.

Remember that in step three all we did is decide to, this is a mental action. Step three is not a get out of your seat and do something step. There is a great prayer in the big Book on page 63 that can be part of this step too. The prayer begins in the third paragraph of that page. So how do we surrender our will and our life to God as we understand him? More will be revealed, steps four-nine show us how to live a God centered life as opposed to a me centered life.

Note from the author: This article is not intended to replace a sponsor. Working the steps should be done with the suggestion of a sponsor. This article is also a reflection of on person's experience and is by no means the definitive way to do step three.

"THE STEP THREE PARABLE"

A drunk is staggering along the street and he meets God. "God, I can't do this anymore," he says. "Please, please, will you give me sobriety?"

God says, "Sobriety isn't free, how much money do you have?"

The drunk reaches into his pocket. "Fifty bucks."

"I'll take it," says God, "you're sober."

The man stands up straight, drunk no more. It feels pretty good. "Yeah but, God?" "Yes?" "I know I gave you my money willingly. But, you see, I need to get gas for my car."

God says, "You have a car?"

"Well, yes."

"You didn't tell me that. I'll take the car."

"But..."

God interrupts and says, "I'll take the car. It's part of the price for your sobriety."

"But how will I get to work?"

"You have a job? I'll take the job, too."

"But God, how will I pay my mortgage?"

"Mortgage? You have a house? I'll take that too."

"But God, my family. How will I take care of them if You have my house and my job?"

God says to him gently and lovingly: "In order to keep your sobriety; you must give Me these things. But I will let you drive My car, as long as you remember it's MY car. You can have the job, but remember you're working it for ME. It's My house but I will let you live in it. And as for the family, they are MY family but I will trust you to take care of them."

FIRST THINGS, *cont'd from p. 1*

God is stronger in our lives and He will present us with opportunities to help others.

Life being what it is, we forget what it is that we are supposed to be doing, and "First Thing First" can re-enter our lives just when we need it again. Because we will never be perfect, eventually we will meet again our old friends, the slogans. Welcome them with open arms and be comforted by them again, because they are spiritual principles given to us by a loving God --- tools we can use as needed to repair our lives again.

EDDIE, *continued from page 1*

After about an hour the service broke up into smaller, informal groups who chatted over coffee and pastry about Eddie.

I could say that Eddie was a living presence in the room but, for me, that wasn't the case. For me, who was well acquainted with Eddie but was not a very close friend, he was there only in the memories of all in attendance. This was about grieving for the loss of a man who lived the way I want to live and died with courage and dignity free of alcohol. It was that simple for me and yet, it was also very profound. I guess I still have certain expectations about the final event in a person's life. I think there should be more to the story. Somehow, I'm left with the rather self-centered feeling...is that all there is? Eddie was not old. The terminal illness that finally took him did so in his early fifties. But that really has little to do with my sense of incompleteness. I think I know what the problem might be. I don't like to admit it but I couldn't shake the nagging thought that I haven't done as well as Eddie. I am the thing that's incomplete. When I first got sober I often heard older member speak of an AA who has passed on a few years earlier. He used to say that it was a good day to live; a good day to die and his bags were packed. Whether that was true I don't know but I certainly love the sentiment. What is true is my bags are definitely not packed yet. From what I knew of Eddie over the last dozen years or so, I think his bags were packed.

So a friend's death turned into a time of reflection on where I stand before my creator. I suppose you could see this a pretty self-centered and maybe it is. Still, this is how I felt and this is what has been going through my mind since. Everyone I've known in AA who has died sober has been an inspiration to me in one way or another. Eddie inspires me to take my tenth step inventories a little more diligently, to stretch my hand out a little more often and with a bit more urgency. Eddie's was a life well lived. His yesterdays are now a dream of happiness and he has left us with a vision of hope for all our tomorrows. Save me a seat, Eddie.

"in aa i get to
be a weapon
of god!"

greg b.

What Was So Good About Those Old-timers?

Anonymous

The other day I was reading "DAILY REFLECTIONS" and was struck by how different the style of writing was from most of the passages in this wonderful book of meditations. Then, I noticed it was a quote from Dr. Bob, AA's other co-founder. (Since I haven't asked AA World Service's permission, I won't quote this passage but it can be found in "DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS," on page 308 and in "DAILY REFLECTIONS" on page 25.) Not only was this passage different but it was just a little more personable, a tad more homespun, if you will. I don't know why but I found it refreshing. I'm sometimes critical of the political correctness of our times, a habit I know I need to pray about overcoming. So it was like a breath of spring air to read a paragraph that was written as if by someone eavesdropping on a private conversation between a sponsor and his "pigeon;" as Dr. Bob sometimes called the men he helped.

This got me thinking about Bill and Bob as they have come down to us in our official, conference approved literature. After all, it has been 33 years since Bill passed away and more than 53 since Bob's death. I've met a few AAs who heard Bill speak but the living memory of these men is fading. What we have are what they and others have left us in writing and the fact is Bill wrote a great deal. Bob, it seems wrote little even though he spoke often at meetings and other gatherings and his words were sometimes recorded. Now, if I were wondering about the mere difference in writing styles between any two other people, this would be a purely academic and probably not too interesting exercise. But these two men, along with considerable help from many others both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, founded AA - the very thing that has saved my life and given it meaning beyond my best imagination. Therefore, it seems worthwhile for me to ask myself a few of those deep questions that begin with 'why?'

Before I go any further, let me say that the following is strictly my opinion based on my reading of most of AA's conference approved literature fore, as I mentioned, this is the only source of information about Bill and Bob that most of us have.

First, why did Bill do most of the writing? Before he wrote "ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS" he had never written anything other than personal letters in his life. Part of the answer has to be that somebody had to do it. A book codifying the recovery program as it had been developed through trial and error was considered essential by AA's pioneers. The reason was purely practical; they didn't want a word-of-mouth program becoming garbled with hundreds or thousands of different interpretations as it was passed from one recovering drunk to the next over time. Bill was sober the longest and a society of drunks helping one another was pretty much his idea, therefore, he was the logical choice to set down on paper what he and the others had discovered to be most successful. It was also hoped that the message of recovery could be transmitted in writing. It is hard to realize that in the late 1930s no one knew for certain if a drunk could get the program through reading about how others did it. In that sense the "Big Book" was a real experiment. In a deeper sense I think Bill was fulfilling one of AA's primary spiritual axioms; 'you can't give away what you don't have.' Think about it. If you want to help someone who has asked for help and all you can think to tell him is 'don't drink and go to meetings,' that isn't really transmitting the message is it? The "Big Book" is really a printed version of the collective experience of those first one hundred or so members of the then nameless fellowship. This is how they did it in black and white. It is plain for anyone to see and understand provided they read it with a desire to stop drinking. Putting the program in writing did far more than preserve it; it created the program. Before "ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS" was published those one hundred members of the fledgling movement of reformed drunks each had his own idea about how the thing should work. The book ended the debate over what the message of AA should be.

There would be no more argument over whether the program should be religious, scientific, spiritual or a mixture of all these elements. It finalized what the early members' experience had taught them and, in so doing, it gave voice to all the differing opinions through what we now call the group conscience. It gave AA the tools it needed to go forward. In a very real sense, before the "Big Book" we were like newly sober drunks on our pink clouds, full of good intentions and maybe a little missionary zeal, but with no real idea how to help anyone. A word-of-mouth movement might have continued to work well if the fellowship had stayed small but what of the millions who did not yet know there was a way out? Finally, "ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS" did something more that I'm not sure those early members fully understood at the time. By stating near the end of those often quoted first 164 pages that we know only a little, that God will continue to reveal more to us, Bill and the others established the tradition of humility. We are not to take ourselves too seriously. The "Big Book," even the AA fellowship itself, is not the be all and end all of recovery from our terrible disease. With humility as our guiding principle, we share our experiences along with whatever strength and hope we have been given. We should never preach.

This is all great news. I think it is doubtful that AA would still be around today had the pioneers not given us our basic text. Yet, this is not the whole story. Action was needed to breathe life into the pages of the "Big Book." The story section was and is AA's testimonial that it really works. But the people who wrote those testimonials had to actually work it first. That, I think, is where Dr. Bob's legacy truly rests. There is no doubt that Bill did a lot of twelfth step work. But it seems apparent that as time went on Bill was increasingly preoccupied with perpetuating AA. Bob, on the other hand became the poster child of service. We are told he treated 5,000 drunks in Akron, Ohio from the time he got sober in 1935 until terminal cancer made it impossible to continue working sometime in 1949. None of these "paying customers," as he called them, were charged a cent. Bob provided early sponsorship to many of them. Since the desire to drink plagued him for his first few years of sobriety, his early motivation in helping so many was doubtless based upon his own urgent need to avoid the first drink. Later, though, I suspect that Dr. Bob was motivated by something higher. The man who, when asked late in his life to describe AA in two words replied, "love and service," could not have failed to grow beyond the mere need to maintain his own sobriety. By doing so, and demonstrating this fact in his daily life, Dr. Bob bequeathed to all future generations in AA the priceless gift of selflessness.

Why should this matter to us today? Everyone who has been in AA for a short time knows or, at least has been told, that service is important to his or her recovery. To me the answer is that Dr. Bob demonstrated this fact in his life to a degree that few, if any, have equaled. And because he was a co-founder this demonstration carries a far greater significance to AA as a whole than if someone living today were to do just as much. Speaking for myself, I can easily take AA for granted. It is so well established today - 65 years after the publication of the "Big Book." It is difficult to imagine a time when it was all new and very much dependent on its two co-founders for guidance and example. Remember, it was only in 1955, at the second international convention in St. Louis, that Bill turned over control of AA's affairs to the General Service Conference. Before that time AA could have been roughly compared to a new group founded in a place where AA had not existed before. By necessity, the founder of the group handled pretty much everything. As time went on, the founder's 'pigeons' matured in sobriety and eventually the group conscience asserted itself. However, until this inevitable event took place, the founders every word and deed would have been taken as final.

Continued on page 4

With the "Big Book" as a guide, this old-timer would have wisely seen this dependence as unhealthy for the group and would have encouraged the rise of the group conscience even at the expense of his or her reduced status. This, in fact, is what happened in 1955. (For the full story, please read "AA COMES OF AGE.")

While Dr. Bob was working his prodigy of service, Bill was developing the traditions out of the experience of AA's adolescent period of the 1940s. Bill was concerned that AA would be around for generations to come in the form that had been hammered out through practical experience. His work took on new meaning when Bob fell ill near the end of the decade. Bill realized that the old-timers like he and Bob would pass from the scene perhaps sooner than they suspected. Who or what then would serve as the collective group conscience of the fellowship? Without something to take the place of AA's aging co-founders and pioneers, would the movement splinter into numerous competing factions? If this happened, would the kind of service Bob's life had come to exemplify continue? The General Service Conference was Bill's idea to replace he and Dr. Bob. The groups would send elected representatives to New York each year to deliberate and vote on matters affecting AA as a whole and to oversee the fellowship's world services, which even then were starting to spread to other countries. However, for a time, Bill was almost alone in his conviction. Dr. Bob was something of a holdout on the subject but eventually he agreed to support Bill. In 1950, at the first international convention in Cleveland, it was agreed to give the General Service Conference a five-year trial. If it worked, the entire fellowship would adopt it and Bill and Bob would voluntarily

relinquish control. It was no coincidence that the twelve traditions, in the current short form we have today, were also formerly adopted at this convention. It was here too the Dr. Bob gave his last public talk. In it he urged the members to stay true to the simplicity of the AA message. Privately, he admonished Bill to not louse this thing up with a lot of scientific jargon and the like "Let's keep it simple" was his last advice to his friend, his co-founder and sponsor.

And that is what caught and held my attention the other day while reading "DAILY REFLECTIONS." Bill was the visionary, the writer and the one with the plan. While he was not always right and sometimes had to yield to wiser counsel, he did pretty well just the same in my humble opinion. Dr. Bob was the hands-on doer, the one who put into practical use the principles of the movement, who led by example. If Bill was the brain of AA, Bob was its heart. Together they gave us our soul. They complemented one another almost perfectly. In their stories we have a complete picture of what it means to be an AA member. Bill with his selfless devotion to preserving and protecting the program; Bob with his equally selfless devotion to love and service to the still suffering alcoholic. Together they kept it simple, sometimes in spite of themselves. What was so good about those good old-timers? The best answer is the fact that a newcomer can step into one of over 100,000 AA groups in roughly 150 countries today and, if they want what we have, the chances are good they will receive what has been so steadfastly handed down to us. The real questions remain; what am I doing to preserve and protect this fellowship of the spirit? What have I done today for the drunk who still suffers?

OVERWHELMED Anonymous

The first month in A.A. is usually the hardest for the newcomer. Often times, we have lost a lot -- home, job, family, resources, health, and happiness, to name a few possibilities. On top of all that, we are looking at a new program that seems to be incredibly complicated - Steps, Traditions, Home Group, Sponsor, meetings, Big Book -- all on top of our personal problems. So how do we swallow this elephant? One bite at a time!

The first thing we need to do is to set some priorities. Write a list of all the important issues in your life that need to be addressed, like housing, cash resources, family needs --- whatever your major concerns are. This list can be changed when needed, but it can help you focus from the start.

Information is what we need next, and the best place to get that is from someone who has answers. You can go up to any person of the same sex and say, "I'm a newcomer and I need some help.", and you will get all the help you can handle. We suggest a same-sex resource because you don't need the additional responsibility of a relationship at first. This person can be a Temporary Sponsor or just a Resource, if you want. The next best place to get topical information is from the pamphlets. Most groups have some pamphlets available for free.

And finally, now that I have your attention, you need a short course in what will happen:

1. We have three jobs in AA: A. Learn how to change our minds B. Learn how to change our behavior C. Share with others what we have learned
2. The 12 Steps can be broken up into four sections: A. Give Up - Steps 1-3 B. Wake Up - Steps 4-7 C. Make Up - Steps 8 & 9 D. Keep Up - Steps 10 - 12
3. Alcoholism is a disease of the emotions. Your emotions will lie to you. We all made decisions based on our feelings and made many mistakes. We will learn to make decisions based on what is right and wrong instead.
4. In Step 1, list 5 ways that you are powerless over alcohol and 5 ways that your life has become unmanageable due to the use of alcohol. This is a partial track record of your drinking history and is proof positive to you that you either are or are not an alcoholic.
5. Each Step logically leads to the next Step. Take them in order and don't skip any. Get a Sponsor to explain them to you.
6. We know that you want to feel better - EVERY DAY. You will learn how to do this in A.A.. We all feel that way. You are now one of us. We take care of our own.

Thank you to those who submitted material for this issue!

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of AA or York Area Intergroup. All submissions are greatly appreciated but sometimes editing must be to accommodate the format. Articles can be hand written, typed or emailed. Submissions can be any length; a page or two or a paragraph or two.

To submit articles for the April issue I can be reached at:

email me at: salmomark@hotmail.com

land mail at: Mark L
116 Maple Street
Wrightsville, PA 17368

I can also be reached by visiting York Area's website @ www.york-pa-aa.org/

Share your experience, strength, hope & wisdom with a pen.