



The Road

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



Volume 2, Issue 1

York Area Intergroup

June 2004

LITTLE STEPS—BIG REWARD Rose H.

OK I now have two months of sobriety. What a rollercoaster; all ups and downs no even keels. Health problems keep popping up; years of drinking take its toll on the body. At least now I only get the shakes from time to time. I feel weak and worn-out. Some days are clear and other days I feel like I'm in a dense fog. It is scary when the brain misfires refusing to work. I'm equally bowled over by the good and bad moments.

I think the old-timers love us new-comers because we are such a mess. One look at us and the old-timers drop to their knees and thank their higher power that they are past all the confusion and garbage. Oh to be on a less bumpy road.

Working on step four is a thrill a minute. I am uncovering memories buried so deep that I did not even remember them. All of the past is being dumped at my feet. One look and I want to run in the other direction.

Funny when I put everything down on paper for the first time I couldn't believe it is my life. I did what? I went where? You have got to be kidding.

Reading it I am shocked. I am awful. My sponsor assures me we have all been there. She tells me that there is nothing that I can write that will shock her. Then she reads my list. A sweat broke out on her brow, there was a coughing fit. Continuing to read there was a red flush on her face and I think her eyes were bulging. There were about three "well"... then "boy you are creative". Just like the good sponsor she is we got down to work on the list. Step four is profound and difficult.

I think step four is a test for how honest you are being with yourself. Take my word for it, if you make your sponsor's eyes bulge, sweat and blush you are being honest.

Seriously, step four seems to be a turning point in leading a sober life. If you can go back a read over your list with only a little cringe, you are dealing with it well. It is what it is, the past! Life goes on. Let go of it and let God. You will be glad you did. It works if you work it.

Step Six: How Willing Am I? Anonymous

This article is reprinted from an earlier issue of "The Road".

The 12 & 12 starts out by describing this step as the one that separates the men from the boys. WOW! sounds like this might be important if I want to mature in my recovery. What was confusing for me is that the Big Book only devotes only one paragraph to this step. **"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."**

How do I know if I am entirely ready? How can I become entirely ready? What if I missed a character defect or two in my step 5? Will God entirely remove them? and when? These are a few of the questions that dogged me.

Reading that paragraph in the Big Book points out that willingness is indispensable. How willing am I to let go of the behaviors that keep me from growing closer to God? For me step 6 marks a total surrender, not only in my mind but also in my body. I had to do things (actions) to become willing. The actions I take when doing my sixth step are:

RITUAL I used ritual to symbolize my willingness. It put thoughts into action, by the way step 6 is in the chapter titled Into Action. I wrote my character defects out on paper and burned it. This was a symbolic gesture, I know it sounds goofy but when I drank I used symbolism too (like taking my own mug to a keg party to show that I was serious about drinking).

PRAYER I made prayer part of my ritual. I'm not one of those people that has elegant prayers. I just speak to God and I'm sure He understands. My prayers are centered on removing character defects to increase my usefulness to Him, becoming willing and awareness of my defects. Prayer adds meaning to ritual.

MEDITATION For me prayer is about speaking with God and meditation is about listening for God. Meditation is the other half of good communication.

*Cont'd on page 3, see **STEP SIX***

EVENTS CALENDAR

JUNE 6: 2nd Area 59

MiniAssembly

"Our Singleness of Purpose"

8AM registration - sessions begin at 9AM

Elizabethtown Friendship Fire Company, 171 N. Mount Joy St., Elizabethtown, PA

Registration: \$15 (includes hot lunch)

Deadline: May 26, 2004

Make check out to: EPGSA

Mail to: Dora Dise-Herzog, 620 Enfield Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601

JUNE 13: Hilltop Group Picnic

Noon till ??

Rocky Ridge County Park

Ruffed Grouse Pavilion

Please bring covered dish, (Hot, Cold, Soda, etc).

JUNE 27: 3rd Area 59

MiniAssembly

"What Is the Message"

8AM registration - sessions begin at 9AM

The Scottish Rite, 300 Market Street, Williamsport, PA

Registration: \$15 (includes hot lunch)

JULY 11: 8AM Group Picnic

Noon till dusk

Farquahar Park, York City

2PM Speaker Joe R. from Phila. former 8AM member

JULY 11: 4th Area 59

MiniAssembly

"Cooperation Without Affiliation"

8AM registration - sessions begin at 9AM

8AM

Ramada Inn, Delaware Water Gap, PA

Registration: \$15 (includes hot lunch)

Deadline: July 1, 2004

Make check out to: EPGSA

Mail to: John Tyler, 8 Spencer Street, Apt #1, Carbondale, PA 18407

AUGUST 8: Intergroup PICNIC

11AM-5PM

Ruffed Grouse Pavilion

Rocky Ridge County Park

AUGUST 14 Dover Picnic

Noon till ??

Brookside Park, Dover

Singleness of Purpose vs. Primary Purpose

Anonymous

Since I've been a member of AA I've been hearing about the importance of singleness of purpose. Our fellowship was founded on the idea that one drunk talking to another could win the confidence of his or her fellow alcoholic the way no one else could. Such confidence is essential for breaking down the newcomer's resistance to the often-radical ideas contained in the steps. "The Doctor's Opinion" in the Big Book goes into some detail on this point and anyone who has ever tried to work with a "wet" drunk will readily attest that no practicing alcoholic wants to hear anything about drinking from a position of authority. The only message that works for most is one that comes from the sober alcoholic's own bitter experiences with drinking. By sharing these openly and honestly with the still foggy newcomer, barriers of resentment, false pride and fear are broken down when it becomes clear the sober drunk has no ax to grind and knows exactly what he or she is talking about. At last here is someone who truly understands. No doctor or counselor, however skilled and sympathetic, can duplicate the knowing, from-the-heart talk of an AA member on a 12th step call.

Alcoholics Anonymous was pieced together by borrowing heavily from religion and medicine. One could easily make the argument that we AA's have never had a collective original idea except for the concept of one drunk talking to another. If it weren't for this essential part of the AA program, the 12 steps could be administered by any competent doctor or therapist. In fact, some alcoholics have gotten sober this way. "The Doctor's Opinion" mentions that the aggregate of recoveries brought about through more traditional means was great at least at the time the Big Book was written. However, Dr. Silkworth goes on to say that nothing he had seen was as effective as the movement then taking shape among alcoholics. Clearly the idea of one drunk talking to another as the foundation principle of AA was firmly established from the earliest beginnings of our fellowship.

Just as clearly the alcoholic who talks to the newcomer must stick to alcoholism. Many feel if he or she dilutes the message with too much talk of other matters, such as drug addiction, the newcomer could become confused and the mystical connection might not take place. Of even greater concern to those who view with alarm is the potential destruction of AA itself if we let too much talk of "outside issues" into our meetings. If we do, the great fear is the newcomers will drift away to perish in a sea of alcohol and eventually AA, robbed of its "singleness of purpose," will die.

If this sounds a tad melodramatic it is. Of course, I'm expressing my opinion only. Please don't try to figure out who I am by analyzing my writing style so you can corner me after some meeting and beat me over the head with your Big Books. I'm writing this article as a plea for tolerance and that most difficult to define quality loosely known as common sense. Everywhere I turn in York AA these days I seem to sense a growing intolerance for anyone who dares to speak of anything other than alcoholism. And, it doesn't stop with hostility toward those with the words "drug" or "addict" on their lips. Anyone mentioning religion or even books that haven't been blessed by the General Service Conference (an organization most have heard of but few know anything about) can expect to be subject to not-so-gentle lectures about "outside issues" or even ostracized by many AA's who would be offended to be accused of intolerance. It's as if an entire AA community has fallen victim to an epidemic of bleeding deaconism.

But, of course, that is not the case. Most in this fellowship are tolerant of the many and varied opinions of others. They, like me, sit in meetings and silently recite the serenity prayer as yet another zealous member, with the very best of intentions and purest of motives, preaches about singleness of purpose. The sermon varies depending on whether the offence that provoked it was a

"drugalogue" or some perceived threat to the apparent sanctity of the Big Book but the theme is always the same; "this is the one and only true AA message, I've got, you don't and if you want to stay sober you'd better get it."

AA has been debating this question of singleness of purpose, in one form or another, since our earliest days. In the 1930s a man we would refer to today as "cross-addicted" asked for admission to the Akron group. He was up front about his other addiction and felt it carried a worse stigma than alcoholism. Would the other members of the group want him among them? As the "12 & 12" tells the story, those early members debated the man's fate pro and con until one of the elders (probably Dr. Bob) pointed out that what they were really afraid of had less to do with the welfare of the group and more to do with their own reputations. What would people think? The elder then asked one question, which silenced all further discussion; "what would the Master do?" The story concludes that the dully-addicted newcomer was welcomed into the group and never caused any trouble about his other problem. In fact, he went on to help many other alcoholics who might have been lost had he been denied membership because of his problem other than alcohol.

This story illustrates just about all we need to know about singleness of purpose. First, it focuses our attention on our primary purpose. Too often singleness of purpose seems to read like single-mindedness of purpose. Single-mindedness is just intolerance with a hyphen. By contrast, primary purpose reminds us that this world is more varied shades of gray than straight black and white. Primary purpose is about conformity to broad principles rather than strict adherence to narrow doctrines. It speaks of the spirit of the traditions instead of the letter of the law. If I follow our primary purpose I am more likely to wear the world like a loose garment and not a straightjacket. Our primary purpose helps to ensure that AA stays out of the hospital and missionary business both of which some of the early members wanted to pursue. By doing so the groups stay focused on carrying the message of recovery as described in all our literature, and not just the Big Book, to the still suffering alcoholic. Second, our primary purpose helps me to see all the traditions in their proper light. When we focus on the one goal of one drunk talking to another in a spirit of love and service we easily see how involvement in public controversies, active self-promotion of groups, large contributions of money from outside the fellowship and so on would uselessly dilute our strength and confuse the public and newcomers alike as to what we are all about. Remember the Washingtonians of the 1840s and their disastrous misadventures into the abolition of slavery and the temperance movement, which brought them down in only a few years? AA is not bullet proof. The same thing could happen to us. Imagine if the General Service Office were to go public with AA's official views on abortion, gay marriage, the war on terror, etc., etc. The question the early Akron group members posed, "what would people think" would truly apply this time. I think it is easy to guess what they would think and it would not have much to do with our real purpose.

So, primary purpose, or singleness of purpose if you prefer, is a tradition thing. Nowhere in our literature do I find anything that says members should be watchdogs of pure AA and move quickly to blot out the stain of drug talk and non-approved books. How did we twist this principle that is so necessary for the survival of our entire fellowship into a justification to act as self-appointed AA cops? The answer is similar to the one those early Akron group members found when they inventoried their collective consciences. It also has to do with fear. I know what it feels like to sense a potential threat to the very thing that means life to me. My gut reaction is the same. I want to kill it while it is young. But then I

*Cont'd on page 3, see **Purpose***

Meet and Eat Group June Speakers Schedule

June 4: Robert

June 11: Sam P 29 years

June 18: Steve H. 20 years

June 25: Steve I. 16 years

Home Groups send me your speakers schedule and it will be printed in *The Road*. Also send me names of home group members celebrating anniversaries I will print those too.

INSANITY ANONYMOUS

One of the greatest problems we face is our feelings that our life is "normal". It was normal for Dad to beat us all. It was normal to drink with my friends. It was normal to blame others for everything that went wrong. And because it was normal, it must be right.

Through the course of our drinking history, we ended up doing things we wish we had not done. We HAD TO do them at the time, but we really wish we had not done them -- especially now. We have problems at work and at home, problems with relationships, problems with money. We often feel angry, regretful, ashamed. We blame others in our mind and try to justify our actions but we still feel bad every day. And on top of everything else, we think this is "normal" just because it has always been that way !

A.A. teaches us how to change our minds. This is important, because we have developed an inaccurate way of thinking and an incorrect set of beliefs. We believe that how we feel is the right way to feel, because it has always been that way. Based on our past behavior, we believe that we SHOULD feel angry, regretful and ashamed. Sometimes it takes awhile to sink in that we are not bad people trying to get good -- we are sick people trying to get well.

So your Uncle Hank has cancer and you go down to the hospital to tell him that he is a bad person because his hair is falling out and he has to throw up every ten minutes. He's bad because he isn't taking care of his family. His illness is stealing rent money from his family to pay for doctors, and it's all his fault. That's fair, isn't it ? It's okay to beat up on a sick person, right ?

So look around you right now and pick out somebody. What are they thinking and feeling ? Maybe they look over at you. Do they know what YOU are thinking and feeling ? Of course not. You are the only one who knows how you feel. THE ONLY ONE. So why would you beat up on yourself with bad emotions that only you can feel ? That person you hate with a desperate passion --- the one who hurt you so badly --- has no idea how you feel. To relive that experience again and again and feel bad about it only hurts you. To hurt yourself or those you love and do it again and again and again is insane. In this case, it is also unnecessary. Recognize and acknowledge the illness aspect of alcoholism, and realize that you aren't like that any more. Release your fear, hurt, resentment, anger, frustration and shame as you write your Fourth Step and stop hurting yourself with the past. Those days are gone, and you aren't like that any more.

STEP SIX *continued from page 1*

CLEANSING All I needed to do is examine my daily actions and identify those that might separate me from God.

I choose to clean my language up. I tried to drop profanity from my vocabulary. I don't think God uses that language. I cleaned my closet. This too was symbolic but I let go of those clothes that did not serve any positive purpose in my life. I fasted for a day too. The point here is that I wanted to physically let go of things which helped me to spiritually let go too.

I still have plenty of defects today but after going through this process I feel more willing.

Purpose *continued from page 1*

Think of the Akron group's elder statesman. What would the Master do? Who am I to judge my own sick brother and sister? Do I not have a sacred obligation to show the same patience, understanding, tolerance and love to every single member or potential member of AA that was shown to me without any reservation whatever? Any sincere AA knows the answers to these questions.

When I hear someone talk about drugs or the races or overeating or sex addiction or some other problem besides alcohol I try to listen to what that person says about their drinking. So far, the vast majority have talked about being drunks like me and how much they want to stop and stay stopped. When I hear this I know they are one of us and they have every right to be here. As they grow in AA they gradually limit their talk of other things and learn the traditions and the importance of singleness of purpose. What would happen if I pounced on their first mention of drugs? What would they do if I showed the intolerant face of single-mindedness of purpose? What would you do?

It is Group Picnic Time

Join us at the following picnics, share in fellowship, food and take in a meeting.

June 13: Hilltop Group Picnic

Noon till ??

Rocky Ridge County Park

Ruffed Grouse Pavilion

Please bring covered dish, (Hot, Cold, Soda , etc).

July 11: 8AM Group Picnic

Noon till dusk

Farquahar Park, York City

2PM Speaker Joe R. from Phila. former 8AM member

August 8 Intergroup Picnic

11AM-5PM

Rocky Ridge County Park

Ruffed Grouse Pavilion

August 14 Dover Picnic

Noon till ??

Brookside Park, Dover

To all Group members:

District 45 is beginning to collect histories and photos for inclusion in the new book of A.A. history of York County. We would very much like to have your Group history and photos prominently displayed. Please begin now to collect all of the information you can.

As Chairman of the Archives Committee, I highly recommend that your Group create a Group Officer's position of Group Archivist. The Archivist would be responsible to acquire and maintain written and oral history, Group artifacts, and photos, as you may deem appropriate. The Archivist would also be responsible for the display of the above at Group anniversaries, picnics, workshops, conventions and elsewhere, as you see fit. Your Group will have complete control of when and where -- or even if -- you want your Group history displayed.

If your Group wants included in this new history book, please forward your written history and photos, if any, to the address below no later than September 30, 2004.

Thank you for your participation in this historic undertaking.

Respectfully,

Bernie Kerrick
District 45 Archives

Get The Road at home!

That's right you can have The Road delivered by e-mail. "What do I need to do?" you ask. It is easy; just e-mail me at the e-mail address listed below. Tell me that you would like the road e-mailed to you. "OK so what does it cost?" you ask. Nothing it is FREE! I will send it to your work e-mail if you wish too.

A.A. Trivia Quiz

Answer the questions below just to check your AA trivia knowledge. E-mail me your answers or look for the correct answers published in the July issue of "The Road". Have fun!

1. Who are the two people that started our fellowship?
2. How many A.A. members were there when the Big Book was written?
3. What does the W. stand for in Bill's name?
4. How many pages are in the original Big Book without the stories?
5. When did Bill W. and Dr. Bob meet?
6. When did Dr. Bob get sober?
7. How did Bill W. and Dr. Bob meet?
8. What is the name of the book written about Bill W.?
9. What was the name of the group Bill W. was part of before founding A.A.?
10. Who was A.A. #3?

BONUS: What was the stepping stones?

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 July 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.