



# The Road

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



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York Area Intergroup

December 2004

## ABOUT THE 12<sup>TH</sup> TRADITION

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

I remember sitting in my very first meeting and staring at two window shades at the far end of the room. Each had twelve numbered sentences; one was labeled “twelve steps” and the other “twelve traditions.” The steps were to the left so I naturally read them first. The word God, with a capital G, was mentioned in steps three, five, six and eleven. I knew that “Him,” with a capital H in step seven meant God and I figured the phrase “...a Power greater than ourselves...” in step two was probably code for the “G” word since “Power” was even capitalized. I fidgeted a little in my seat. I was a scared and lost soul of a drunk but I’d be damned if I was going to let go of my self-righteous contempt for anything that smacked of religion. Still, steps three and eleven did contain a qualifier in parentheses; (as we understood Him) that let me know I was free to interpret God as I wished, with or without upper case lettering.

Reluctantly, but with my curiosity aroused, I continued down the list of traditions. Some of these seemed obvious while others were a bit obscure. They didn’t seem to have a lot to do with me personally but at least they didn’t generate as much suspicion in my still scrambled brain. Then I came to tradition twelve. “Principles before personalities” seemed to leap off the widow blind and hit me between the eyes. I was reminded of a college history course I’d taken many years before that talked about the United States Constitution making ours a government of laws and not of men. In other words the principles expressed in the constitution were more important than the personalities of the people we elect as our representatives. This was a concept that had appealed to my idealism then about which I had come to cynically doubt since. I was practiced in the fine art of finding fault with everything from the government to the business world and, of course, organized

*Cont’d on page 2, see Tradition 12*

## Practicing makes...

*“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we tried to... practice these principles in all our affairs.”*

The second part of step twelve, as stated above, I find to be one of the most difficult suggestions found in the steps. Sure the personal inventory in step four was like grating the back of your thighs with a cheese grater and sharing that inventory with another person was like pouring salt on those thighs. The second part of step twelve suggests that I treat ALL people with the same love and tolerance that I treat my fellow AA members in a meeting. I was told after a continuous year of sobriety that the real work begins now. At the time I didn’t quite understand what these AAs with many years of sobriety were talking about but I figured that if I stuck around just one more day at a time I might find out. Practicing these principles in all my affairs is the spiritual growth the program promises.

What principles are we to practice? For me the principles of absolute honesty, absolute tolerance, absolute unselfishness, absolute peace of mind and absolute love are my spiritual goal. Dictionary.com defines absolute as perfect in quality or nature; complete. To the best of my limited knowledge the only perfect source of these principles is the God of my understanding and the only way to get close to these is to foster a relationship with Him. Is it a lofty goal to just do one of these perfectly? You bet, but I would rather aim high and miss than aim low and hit.

So how do I go about practicing these principles? I divided my day up in to the activities that I normally do: work, my children, my wife and interaction with other “normal” people (driving and so forth). I had to abandon my old ideas (sound familiar?) about these activities.

I had the idea that every person that did not drive the way I thought they should was an idiot. I would freely express my displeasure with them also. Simply put I didn’t treat them as God’s children. I never considered

*Cont’d on page 3, see Practicing*

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### DECEMBER

#### 24 Christmas Eve Alcothon

5 PM to 11:30 PM - meetings on the even hours

Otterbein United Methodist  
301 West Philadelphia Street

**PLEASE PARK at the**

**SUSQUEHANNA**

**COMMERCE CENTER**

**221 West Philadelphia Street**

west side basement entrance.

*Please bring food to share if you are able.*

#### 25 Christmas Day Alcothon

7 AM to 11:30 PM - meetings on the even hours

Otterbein United Methodist  
301 West Philadelphia Street

west side basement entrance.

*Please bring food to share if you are able.*

#### 31 New Year’s Eve Alcothon

5 PM to 11:30 PM - meetings on the even hours

Otterbein United Methodist  
301 West Philadelphia Street,

west side basement entrance.

*Please bring food to share if you are able.*

#### 31 Path Finders Group

#### New Year’s Eve Party

Luther Memorial Evangelical

Lutheran Church

1907 Hollywood Drive, York  
starts @ 8PM

2\$ cover & free meeting @

9:30PM

DJ music

please bring a covered dish with food in it

### JANUARY

#### 1 New Year’s Day Alcothon

7 AM to 11:30 PM - meetings on the even hours

Otterbein United Methodist  
301 West Philadelphia Street,

west side basement entrance.

*Please bring food to share if you are able.*

**Alcothon Schedule  
on page 4**

## **Tradition 12** *continued from page 1*

religion. I couldn't see my own negative personality was overwhelming any chance I had of opening my mind. Hitting bottom with my drinking had started to change this attitude. I wasn't as sure of myself any longer. After all, I had sworn off forever some months before my last drunk only to drink again within a few days. I had decided blackouts were part of my past but during my last night of drinking I was left with a gap of several hours about which there was no accounting. Maybe the all-powerful, yet somehow worthless, me was out of control. Maybe, just maybe, the people in this meeting with these window shades might have an answer. Something told me that here were principles that would have to come before my personality if I was going to go on living.

As the meeting got started the chairperson introduced himself as a member and not the leader of the group. During the meeting everyone had a chance to talk but no one was forced to say anything. At the end a chairperson for next week's meeting volunteered and we all stood and joined hands for the reciting of the Lord's Prayer; a ritual it was made clear was optional.

I left the meeting with a sense that I had participated in as purely a democratic event as I was ever likely to encounter. It was plain that no one was in charge and that the meeting had been guided by the profoundly simple principle of carrying the message of the group to the alcoholic who still suffers; namely me.

I was sold. I rushed home to tell my wife what a pure and true thing AA is. I couldn't wait to attend the next meeting. To this day I have not lost my love for this fellowship. While I've been to some meetings that haven't been as good as others, I've never been to a bad one. Meetings, like the people who attend them, sometimes get temporarily caught up in personalities. They almost always return to their primary purpose stronger and a little wiser from the experience. Because of our dedication to the principle of anonymity no one can truly be a Mr. or Ms. AA. Those who suffer from egotism are faced with a fellowship that gives them the freedom to be wrong and to grow or not as they see fit. While a relative handful of celebrities may break their anonymity at the public level from time to time, it never seems to harm AA as a whole. In fact, such incidents are usually viewed as object lessons for the rest of us to avoid the same pitfall.

I suppose the greatest benefit I've received from tradition twelve is realized when I try my best to combine it with that part of step twelve which advises me to "...practice these principles in all my affairs." Since all the steps are designed to deflate my ego I have little hope of practicing the principles of AA in every aspect of my life if I forget that my personality has to take a back seat to these same principles. To swallow my pride and make a tenth step amends promptly when necessary, to take the time to talk to someone I sponsor when they need to talk or simply to hold my tongue when the urge to argue or gossip has me in its grip involve sacrificing just a little of that need to be right that made me fidget in my seat at that first meeting. When I give up a little of me for the greater good that is AA I am putting into practical use the spirit of anonymity that is the spiritual foundation not only of all our traditions but of our society itself.

## **MY OPINION: RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**

Bernie K

"... because we don't do it that way." How I love to hear those words. Those words signal a resistance to change and contempt prior to investigation.

I have had occasion to attend other 12-step recovery groups, and that's where I first noticed that statement. Because it wasn't A.A., it was easy for me to listen with a critical ear ---- something I had been unable to do in A.A. I naturally assumed that the people in A.A. had a lock on the best way to do things, and God knows I had proven to my own satisfaction how wrong I was, so I didn't question any A.A. pronouncements from any source. What a mistake THAT was!

Everybody has an opinion about how things should work, and many of us are able to state our convictions with confidence, making us sound like the authority on the issue. I've found that such is not always the case. I was much better able to see this in other types of groups, but it was a real wake up call for me.

Doing the same old things has a large appeal to many of us, because change can be pretty scary and quite often change also requires me to become more responsible, and more responsibility equates to just plain old MORE WORK. That seriously interferes with my VERY comfortable laziness. So I started paying real attention to what was being said in A.A. meetings and I started to recognize resistance to change in what was being said. In the other types of groups, I came to see how -- in many cases -- it was the blind leading the blind, and I didn't want to be getting that for my life from A.A.

Well, change is what A.A. is all about, and the same old things I USED to do is what got me in here to start with. I now believe in some things that can help me to overcome my own resistance to change and also help me to decide if what another is saying is the right thing or only a self-justification.

My standard of what is right and wrong is now found in The Golden Rule -- do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If I don't want you doing that to me, then I shouldn't be doing it to you. Next, I try to make decisions based on what I believe to be right and wrong, not based on how I feel. It is true that alcoholism is a disease of the emotions and my feelings will lie to me. Being comfortable in my laziness and irresponsibility is a death trap for me. And finally, those who REALLY know what they are talking about can not only tell you what to do, but they can also tell you HOW to do it and WHY to do it.

Reasons are why we do something right. Excuses are why we do something wrong. Investigating changes helps us figure out a better way to do things. Old ways maintain old hurts.

***God promises a safe landing,  
not a calm passage!***

## **Practicing** *continued from page 1*

that the slow driver in front of me might be lost or out for a relaxing drive or just not in a hurry. My sponsor at the time told me to pray for them and told me a special prayer to use. I soon found myself much more accepting of other drivers and many times I'm one of those people that are just taking their good old time. I started to practice these principals behind the wheel of my car.

Another affair of my life that I believed caused me grief during my drinking career was my job. I had to look at my old ideas again. I showed up for work every day, even hung-over and my employer owed me for that. I gave more than 100% and my employer owed me even more. I was given the chance to resign from that job after 10 years of employment as a direct result of my drinking. For some reason I did the right thing and resigned without a fight. This was totally out of character for me and the only reason I did it was because a friend of mine that I had great respect for advised that I do so. My employer even paid for my rehab but remember they owed me that and then some. If they would have treated me better I would not have needed to drink. These were my old ideas. Again I never considered the fact that my former employer hired me when I didn't have a job. I never thought about how I could be of service to my employer. I went to work primarily for the pay. I forgot about the personal satisfaction I got from my job. I never considered my former job a gift or an opportunity to help others.

I was fortunate enough to land another job only a few months after resigning and in the same profession. I was originally hired as temporary worker. Right from the beginning I had a different attitude. I set simple goals. I tried to be of service to one person each day. I tried to be tolerant of one person each day. I became willing to do extra when asked and volunteered when the need arose. Sure I still look forward to the pay but it too is a tool to be of service to my family and selected charities. Pay checks are not printed solely to satisfy my overactive drive to fulfill my instincts. I also put in an absolutely honest day's work now too because I don't show up hung-over. I did my best not to worry about only being temporary. I focused on doing my best and being of service. I reminded myself that God is in control and if it is meant to be I would be offered a permanent position. A few years later I'm still working there in a permanent position and striving to be absolutely the best employee that I can be.

Practicing these principles at home is by far the most difficult challenge. I remind myself that I'm in pursuit of spiritual progression not spiritual perfection. There are times and situations that I effectively practice absolute love, tolerance, honesty and peace of mind. What trips me up at home is perfectly described in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Page 114 states that "We have found that we can take our big lumps as they come. We often discover the greater challenge in the lesser and more continuous problems." This statement is absolutely true for me. I can seem to handle the big stuff. Thanks to the program I'm able to sit back, pray and meditate with a major situation. It is the little daily stuff that I let rent space in my head or take my serenity. I'm sure that this strange behavior is puzzling to my wife. My sponsor often asks me when I call him with a situation "How important is it? Will it be important in 5 years?" I then realize that the

situation that I'm allowing to mess with my serenity is really not all that important. My sponsor tells me that he is trying to have an honest relationship with another person when he shares his experience when I ask him about family situations. I always considered myself honest with my wife. She always knew where I was and what I was doing. The only affair I had was with alcohol, not that it is better or worse than affairs with other things or people. Recently I have been thinking about the principle of absolute honesty. I don't often share my feelings and thoughts with my wife. Many times I keep them penned up until I start getting annoyed or restless. I never thought of this as being dishonest but it is. Hiding from myself is what I did when I drank. It dawned on me that I need to talk with my wife and reveal the entire truth. This means that I will become vulnerable. This is frightening until I remind myself that God is still in control and any discomfort I feel will result in growth not death.

Practicing these principles doesn't make perfect but it will result in spiritual growth. Step twelve is the expression of absolute gratitude for the program of Alcoholics

### **On Cultivating Tolerance**

**Dr. Bob Smith**

**From the editorial column of the July 1944 AA Grapevine**

During nine years in AA, I have observed that those who follow the Alcoholics Anonymous program with the greatest earnestness and zeal not only maintain sobriety but often acquire finer characteristics and attitudes as well. One of these is tolerance. Tolerance expresses itself in a variety of ways: in kindness and consideration toward the man or woman who is just beginning the march along the spiritual path; in the understanding of those who perhaps have been less fortunate in education advantages; and in sympathy toward those whose religious ideas may seem to be at great variance with our own.

I am reminded in this connection of the picture of a hub with its radiating spokes. We all start at the outer circumference and approach our destination by one of many routes. To say that one spoke is much better than all the other spokes is true only in the sense of its being best suited to you as an individual. Human nature is such that without some degree of tolerance, each one of us might be inclined to believe that we have found the best or perhaps the shortest spoke. Without some tolerance, we might tend to become a bit smug or superior - which, of course, is not helpful to the person we are trying to help and may be quite painful or obnoxious to others. No one of us wishes to do anything that might act as a deterrent to the advancement of another - and a patronizing attitude can readily slow up this process.

Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered-to opinions. In other words, it often promotes an open-mindedness that is vastly important - is, in fact, a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual.

These, then, are a few of the reasons why an attempt to acquire tolerance should be made by each one of us.

## **Alcothon Meeting Schedule**

### **December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve**

6 PM Fellowship Group  
8 PM Meet & Eat Group  
10 PM Red Lion No Class Group

### **December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day**

8 AM 8AM Group  
10 AM Young People's Group  
12 Noon Back to Basics Group  
2 PM Hilltop Group  
4 PM 4<sup>th</sup> Dimension Group  
6 PM Courage to Change Group  
8 PM Monday Night Basketcases  
10 PM Phoenix Study Group

### **December 31<sup>st</sup> New Year's Eve**

6 PM 8AM Group  
8 PM Fresh Start Group  
10 PM Language of the Heart

### **January 1<sup>st</sup> New Year's Day**

8 AM Bug Light Group  
10 AM Spring Grove Group  
12 Noon Gratitude Group  
2 PM Dover Group  
4 PM Keep It Green Group  
6 PM Sobriety First Group  
8 PM Hilltop Group  
10 PM Weekend Steps Group

## **TIME TO CHANGE Mark L.**

As we all know December is the end of one year and the beginning of a new year is about to start. Over the past year the servants at The Road have submitted articles about the twelve steps and traditions in addition to other alcoholism related articles.

The Road is going to feature articles on service and the twelve concepts over the months of 2005. Yes we will still publish step and tradition articles if written. You might be thinking that all I need to know are steps and traditions. Remember that the first part of step 12 is all about service.

Did you ever wonder what Intergroup does? What is a DCM? How can I get involved with carrying AA into York County Prison? What does a GSR do? All of these are service positions and over the next year we will try to answer these and other questions. Oh yeah we do need help too. If you are looking to do some service writing for The Road is a good way to get involved. If you do

not know what to write about contact me and I'll gladly give you some ideas.

What about those twelve concepts? The concepts were written in 1962 by Bill W. The concepts describe the world service structure of AA. Remember that our home groups are the base of world services. If your home group follows the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition a portion of the money you put in the basket goes to world services. The concepts are a historical record of what worked when AA grew from one group in Akron to thousands of groups worldwide. Bill W. wrote the concepts so that they could be changed to meet changing situations or as he says "unforeseen flaws in the present structure". The concepts outline the rights of our service leaders and the practices that united the service committees with AA World Services Inc. & The AA Grapevine Inc. The concepts describe the checks & balances that keep any one service group from exercising unqualified power, not that any well intentioned drunk would do that.

## **Answers for the November A.A. Trivia Quiz**

1. Bill W. was an only child. **FALSE**
2. Which one of our Co-Founders had a dog named Roger? **Dr. Bob**
3. The 70th Anniversary of AA will be celebrated in what city in 2005? **Toronto**
4. Which Tradition states that every group has the right to be wrong? **Tradition 4**
5. Where was A.A.'s first central office? **Grand Central Station, New York**
6. What word is most used most frequently in the Appendix entitled Spiritual Experience? **change**
7. What is "Rule 62"? **Let's not take ourselves too serious.**
8. What was the name of the printing company that first published the "Big Book"? **Works Publishing**
9. What magazine broke the first big story about Alcoholics Anonymous? **Saturday Evening Post**
10. Where did the first A.A. group call home? **Akron, Ohio**

## **Meet & Eat Group Speaker Schedule for December**

**10<sup>th</sup> Dennis S. 1 year**

**17<sup>th</sup> Al J. 5 years**

**24<sup>th</sup> Kathy W. 8 years**  
@4<sup>th</sup> UNITED METHODIST  
1067 EAST MARKET ST.

**31<sup>st</sup> Chris W. 5 years**  
Meet & Eat meets Monday –  
Friday, 12 Noon at 125  
Edgewood Rd. York (York-  
shire United Methodist)

**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 January issue I can be reached at:  
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**Share your experience, strength, hope & wisdom with a pen.**