

# The Alternative

READING AREA INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER FOR FEBURARY, 2003

Reading Intergroup, PO Box184, Reading, PA 19607

## *This Issue:*

- Dick B. tells us "What it used to be like"
- Part Two of "The Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks" *from our January Issue*
- Group anniversaries and other announcements
- The *Original* Preamble of AA
- Recovered Vs Recovering
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## What It Used To Be Like

You won't learn this in A.A.'s basic text today or in our meetings. But the simplicity of early A.A. will really astound you and attract! Usually there was hospitalization or at least medical help to save the newcomer's life. Only the Bible was allowed in the room. Recovered drunks visited the patient and told their success stories. The newcomer had to identify, admit that he too was licked, and that he would do whatever it took. Dr. Bob visited daily. Then, he would explain the disease as they then understood it; and on the final day, asked two questions to which there was only one answer: (1) Do you believe in God? (2) Are you willing to get down on your knees and pray? The newcomer then gave his life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Many were too sick to venture far; so they lived with the Smiths (and later others) in Akron homes.

It is a myth that they recovered in an afternoon or in four easy lessons. They shook. They shivered. They fidgeted. They forgot. And they were ashamed, insecure, and guilt-ridden. But they learned what a loving God had made available. At the homes, they had daily Quiet Time (Bible study, prayer, asking guidance, reading a devotional, and discussing Anne Smith's Journal). They shared their woes and problems with Dr. Bob, with Anne (his wife), and with Henrietta Seiberling. They had similar Quiet Times in their personal lives or at their home.

They had one meeting a week. No drunkalogs. No whining. No psychobabble. Just prayer. Reading

from Scripture. Quiet Time. Use of The Upper Room or similar devotionals for discussion. Then surrender upstairs for the newcomer in a prayer session resembling that in James 5:14-16. The "elders" prayed with him that alcohol be taken out of his life and that he devote himself to living according to God's will. Following that, downstairs there were announcements about newcomers at hospitals. Socializing. And it started all over again.

There were sessions with Dr. Bob involving a moral inventory (as to adherence to the Four Absolutes), confession, prayer to have the sins removed, and plans for restitution. Did it work? You bet it did. 75% recovered in Akron. Soon, 93% were recovering in Cleveland. That's why we need to know about early A.A.! It took surrender. It took God. It took the Bible, a life-change decision with attendant action, and witnessing to others. It took fellowship. And it took time--lots of it.

The car sped off the highway, went through the guardrail, rolled down a cliff, bounced off a tree and finally shuddered to a stop. A passing motorist, who had witnessed the entire accident, helped the miraculously unharmed driver out of the wreck."Good lord, mister," he gasped, "Are you drunk?" Of course," said the man, brushing the dirt from his suit. "What the hell do you think I am ... a stunt driver?"

## The Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks – *continued from last month!*

When Dr. Silkworth died of a heart attack in his home in New York early in the morning of March 22nd, even those A.A.'s who knew him best and loved him most awoke to the realization that we had lost a greater friend, a greater doctor, a greater man than we had ever realized. It was particularly hard to appreciate the greatness of the man while Dr. Silkworth was yet with us, because of his profound personal modesty and the disarming gentleness, the unassuming and almost invisible skill, with which he accomplished his daily miracles of medical and spiritual healing.



We know that he was a prodigious and relentless worker, but still it was a shock to discover that in his lifetime of work with those who suffer our disease, he had talked with 51,000 alcoholics - 45,000 at Towns Hospital and 6,000 at Knickerbockers!

Yet he was never in a hurry. And he had no "formulas," no stock answers. Somehow he found out very early that the unexpected was to be expected in alcoholism, and for a man who knew as many of the answers as he did, he came to each new case with a wonderfully open mind... the great and classic example of which is his handling of Bill.

And this gentle little doctor with his white hair and his china blue eyes - child's eyes, saints' eyes - was a man of immense personal courage. It must be remembered that he went much farther than merely encouraging Bill's faith in his spiritual experience, he saw to it that Bill was permitted to come back into Towns Hospital to share his discovery with other alcoholics. Today - when "carrying the message to others" has become a very respectable part of an undeniably effective program - it is easy to forget that "carrying the message" in the beginning was a highly unorthodox undertaking. It had no precedent and no history of success; most authorities would have turned thumbs down on it as just plain screwball.

Again, we forget how our technique has been mellowed and refined by the wisdom of experience. We know that the blinding light and the overwhelming rush of God-consciousness are not necessary, that they are indeed very rare phenomena and that the great majority of recoveries among us are of the much less spectacular gradual and educational kind. But in the beginning, the "hot flash" was stressed - nay, insisted upon.

Dr. Silkworth had his professional reputation to lose, and nothing whatever to gain, by permitting and encouraging this unheard-of procedure of one God-bitten drunk trying to pass on his strange story of a light and a vision to other alcoholics - most of whom at that time received it with lively hostility or magnificent indifference.

Then Bill met Dr. Bob, and the first few drunks, incredulously, began to make their incredible recoveries. The infant society, without a book, without a program really, and without a reputation or

standing of any kind - began its growth. We forget how halting and feeble that early growth was, how bedeviled with obstacles in a world skeptical of spiritual experience and often hostile to it.

Dr. Silkworth from the beginning threw all of his weight as a doctor, a neurologist, and a specialist in alcoholism, into aiding the progress of this mongrel and highly unpaired society in every possible way. He committed social and professional heresy right and left in order to publish and implement his burning faith in a movement which as yet only half-suspected its own destiny and which had to grope rather blindly to find terms for its own faith in itself.

When there was need for money to publish the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Dr. Silkworth used his personal influence without stint to help raise the

money. As a preface to the book he wrote the chapter titled, "The Doctors Opinion," giving A.A. his praise and approval without reservation or qualification- at a time when there were only a thin one hundred of us dried up!

He was indeed our first friend, and indeed a friend in need. His faith in us was firmer than our faith in ourselves.

Bill says: "Without Silky's help, we never would have got going - or kept going!" Again, his contribution was indispensable.

Why did he do it?

The answer to that is the answer to Dr. Silkworth's whole career: he loved drunks. Why he loved drunks is a secret known only to God and the doctor - and perhaps the doctor himself did not wholly understand the mystery. "It's a gift," he used to say, his eyes twinkling.

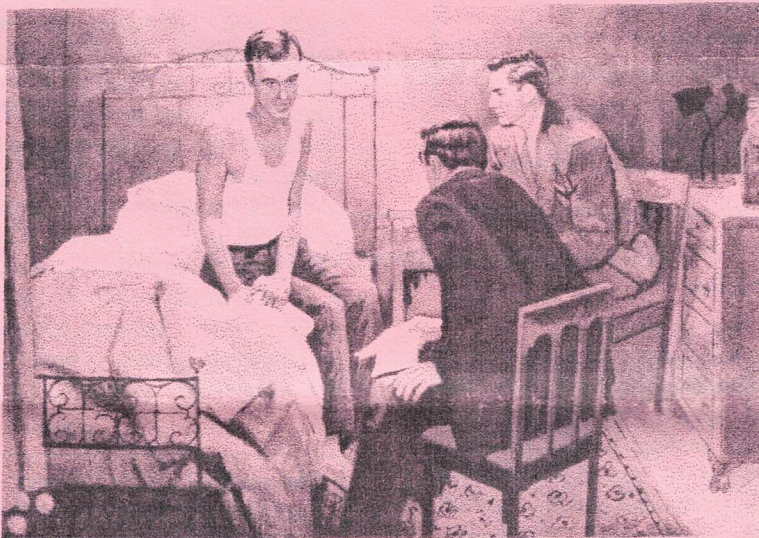
*(Concluded Next Month!)*

WARNING: Consumption of alcohol is a major factor in dancing like an idiot.

3. WARNING: Consumption of alcohol may cause you to tell the same boring story over and over again until your friends want to assault you

4. WARNING: Consumption of alcohol may cause you to say things like this.

5. WARNING: Consumption of alcohol may cause you to tell the boss what you really think of him.





# Behind the Walls

**Reading Intergroup needs  
you to carry the message of  
AA to Berks County Prison.**

*We are currently seeking members to volunteer to carry the AA message behind the walls to members who are incarcerated. All interested members will be required to apply for Clearance, attend an Orientation meeting, and then extend the hand of AA to those who still suffer.*

*There are some of you who passed Clearance, but have yet to go through orientation. Please call us if you are unsure of your status. Thanks.*

**Contact:**

**Men's Prison Chair: Terry M. 610-944-3167**

**Women's Prison Chair: Nikki P. 610-562-0507**



# ANNOUNCEMENTS!

## GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS

*Thank you to all the Groups listed here for your contributions. They greatly help Intergroup to continue to "carry the message"! Sorry if we missed any.*

- Terra Firma Group
- Wires Group
- Leesport Group
- Robesonian Group
- Walnut Street Recovery Group
- Shillington Lifeline
- Tea Thyme
- Willshire Fellowship
- New Millennium Group

If we missed anyone, our apologies. This is the list of groups contributing to Intergroup as of 01/29/03

Below is a list of A.A. volunteers who are cleared for the Berks County Prison. If any of them are still interested please contact me so we can set up an orientation. The prison changed their orientation schedule so we have to get together and see what we can do. The following are cleared and ready to go also please contact me and let me know if you are still interested:

*Brad S, James S, Larry S, Al E, Bruce N,  
Christine H*

The following people still need orientation:

*Jose B, Angel B, Jewett B, Kevin B, Samuel C, Jerry F, Rafael F, Craig G, Joe H, Thomas J, Michael L, Carlos L, Joseph O, Mark P, Peter P, Larry S, Chad S, Melanie C, Joann C, Linda M, Evelyn M, Pam R, Karen W, Betsy W*

Please contact me ASAP

Terry McFadden 610-944-1589

Or fax to: 610-944-3168

Or e/mail [tmaa93@comcast.net](mailto:tmaa93@comcast.net)

Groups With Representation at January's Meeting of Intergroup Were:

- The 164 Group
- Walnut Street Recovery Group
- Leesport
- Time to Start Living
- New Millennium Group
- Alpha
- Books And People
- Spirit of Recovery
- Lifeline
- Robesonian
- Birdsboro
- The Turning Point Group

*If we missed anyone's Group – Our apologies*

Please get the word out to *your* group that Intergroup needs their support. We need the support to continue to print out the Schedules, answer the AA Hotline, compile the Alternative newsletter and many other projects, such as the yearly IG Picnic and even possibly hosting the Alcahthon for 2004!

There's so many more things on our plate! We'd like to share. Get involved; Get represented!

SEND YOUR INTERGROUP REP TO OUR NEXT MEETING!



## THE OLD PREAMBLE

We are gathered here because we are faced with the fact that we are powerless over alcohol and unable to do anything about it without the help of a Power greater than ourselves. We feel that each person's religious views, if any are his own affair. The simple purpose of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is to show what may be done to enlist the aid of a Power greater than ourselves regardless of what our individual conception of that Power may be.

In order to form a habit of depending upon and referring all we do to that Power, we must at first apply ourselves with some diligence. By often repeating these acts, they become habitual and the help rendered becomes natural to us.

We have all come to know that as alcoholics we are suffering from a serious illness for which medicine has no cure. Our condition may be the result of an allergy which makes us different from other people. It has never been by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently cured. The only relief we have to offer is absolute abstinence, the second meaning of A. A.

There are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Each member squares his debt by helping others to recover.

An Alcoholics Anonymous is an alcoholic who through application and adherence to the A. A. program has forsworn the use of any and all alcoholic beverage in any form. The moment he takes so much as one drop of beer, wine, spirits or any other alcoholic beverage he automatically loses all status as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous A.A. is not interested in sobering up drunks who are not sincere in their desire to remain sober for all time. Not being reformers. We offer our experience only to those who want it.

We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree and on which we can join in harmonious action. Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our program. Those who do not recover are people who will not or simply cannot give themselves to this simple program. Now you may like this program or you may not, but the fact remains, it works. It is our only chance to recover.

There is a vast amount of fun in the A.A. fellowship. Some people might be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity but just underneath there lies a deadly earnestness and a full realization that we must put first things first and with each of us the first thing is our alcoholic problem. To drink is to die. Faith must work twenty-four hours a day in and through us or we perish.

In order to set our tone for this meeting I ask that we bow our heads in a few moments of silent prayer and meditation.

I wish to remind you that whatever is said at this meeting expresses our own individual opinion as of today and as of up to this moment. We do not speak for A.A. as a whole and you are free to agree or disagree as you see fit, in fact. it is suggested that you pay no attention to anything which might not be reconciled with what is in the A. A. Big Book.

If you don't have a Big Book. it's time you bought you one. Read it. Study it, live with it, loan it, scatter it, and then learn from it what it means to be an A.A.

## RECOVERED VS RECOVERING...

The Big Book contains 82 instances of the root word "Recover". If you want to know where they are at, I suggest you study the book for yourself.

Within the context of Alcoholics Anonymous, the synonyms *restored* or *healed* are usually an appropriate definition of the recover root.

For those who seek a *cure*, the root *cure* occurs only 4 times in the Big Book, and in no instance does it mean that the fundamental cause or malady is completely taken away—sorry. Nor does the Big Book allow us to sneak the impression that we are normal folk again, and that we can drink like they do. It is clear that eternal vigilance is the shield.

If you consider yourself "recovering" in order to maintain the consciousness that you must never drink, so be it. If you consider yourself "recovered" because the Big Book says that's the way we get, then so be that, too. Either way you will be a winner—you won't drink, and you will base your program of recovery on the teachings of the Big Book

## WHO'S RESPONSIBILITY?

"An AA group, as such, cannot take on all the personal problems of its members, let alone those of nonalcoholic in the world around us. The AA group is not, for example a mediator of domestic relations, nor does it furnish personal financial aid to anyone.

"Though a member may sometimes be helped in such matters by his friends in AA, the primary responsibility for the solutions of all his problems of living rests upon the individual himself. Should an AA group attempt this sort of help, its effectiveness and energies would be hopelessly dissipated.

"This is why sobriety----freedom from alcohol----through the teachings and practice of AA's Twelve Steps, is the sole purpose of the group. If we don't stick to this cardinal principle, we shall almost certainly collapse. And if we collapse we cannot help anyone."

-As Bill Sees It page 79



**\*\*\*\*\*Reading Intergroup has no outside affiliations. We exist as a central office to serve Alcoholics Anonymous groups in the Reading area\*\*\*\*\***

**ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND INTERGROUP MEETINGS.** Meetings are held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month, at 7:30pm, at the UGI building on route 10, just up the road from Queen City Diner. We'd like to see *every group* represented, so come out, show your support and GET INVOLVED! Our next meeting is February, 25<sup>th</sup> 2003. See you there!

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**Intergroup Staff**

Chairperson: Jay K. 610-376-6343  
Secretary: Traci D. 610-404-8923  
Hotline: Traci D. 610-404-8923  
Alternative: Bill S. 610-370-4415  
Women's Prison: Nikki P. 610-562-0602  
Archives: Glenn L. 610-404-4738  
Unity: Roger M. 610-582-3534  
Website: [www.readingintergroup.org](http://www.readingintergroup.org)

Alternate Chair: Patrick M. 610-488-1326  
Treasurer: Roger M. 610-582-3534  
Schedules: Traci D. 610-404-8923  
Books & Literature: Ron S. 610-779-3927  
Men's Prison: Terry M. 610-944-3167  
Institutions: Stan S. 610-375-1441  
Spanish Liaison: Angel R. 610-372-2438  
Bridging The Gap: Tim M. 610-927-3065

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**\*\*\*Institutional Commitments for February 2003\*\*\***

CHILDRENS HOME - *Sundays at 7:30p.m.*

**\*\*Suspended Until Further Notice\*\***

WERNERSVILLE - *Tuesdays at 7:00p.m. - Bldg 34*

4 - Robesonia  
11 - New Millennium Group  
18 - Time To Start Living  
25 - Leesport  
Mar. 4 - Leesport

WERNERSVILLE - *Thursdays at 11:00a.m.*

6 - Alpha  
20 - Boyertown  
13 - OPEN  
27 - OPEN  
Mar. 6 - Turning Point

ST. JOE'S HOSP. - *Mondays at 7:00p.m.*

6 - Robesonia  
13 - Wilshire  
20 - Books & People  
27 - Alpha  
2/3 - Spirit of Recovery

READING DETOX - *Thursdays at 8:00p.m.*

6 - Birdsboro  
13 - The 164 Group  
20 - Alpha  
27 - Spirit of Recovery  
Mar. 6 - Lifeline

CHIT-CHAT - *Thursdays at 8:00p.m.*

6 - Boyertown  
13 - Spirit of Recovery  
20 - Walnut Street Recovery Group  
27 - Time To Start Living  
Mar. 6 - Walnut Street Recovery Group

Please notify anyone at Intergroup if you cannot make your commitment! If you take one for your group, make sure the person agreeing to go has a substitute if they can't make it. If you would like to go to the St. Joe's meeting, contact Melanie at the hospital first to see if there are any AA's there: 610-378-2092. If you are interested in particulars about Chit Chat, contact Brian Halstead, Clinical Director for inpatient care, at 610-678-2332, Ext. 2497. When sending group members to commitments, it's great to double up! Send a newer and an older member, and everyone will benefit!! PLEASE make sure that someone honors the commitment that you take for your group. This could be the only exposure to our Fellowship, that these people have.