



# NATURE COAST JOURNAL

**JUNE 2020**



## How Alcoholics Anonymous Got Started

In 1931 an American business executive, Rowland Hazard, after trying all the possibilities of medicine and psychiatry in the United States, sought treatment for alcoholism with the famous psychiatrist Dr. Carl Jung in Switzerland.

After a year of treatment, Rowland H. the alcoholic felt confident that his compulsion to drink had been removed. However, he found himself drunk shortly after leaving the care of Dr. Jung.

Back again in Switzerland Rowland H the, dejected and depressed, was told by Dr Jung, that his case was nearly hopeless (as with other alcoholics he had treated) and that his only hope (might be) a spiritual conversion with a religious group of his choice.

On his return to the United States , Rowland got in contact with the Oxford Group and soon sobered up.

The Oxford Group was an Evangelical Christian Fellowship founded by American Christian missionary Dr. Franklin Buchman. Buchman was a Lutheran minister who had a conversion experience in 1908 in a Chapel in Keswick , England . As a result of that experience, he founded a movement called A First Century Christian Fellowship in 1921, which had become known as the Oxford Group by 1931.



**Ebby Thacher**

The Oxford Group's concepts were, total surrender of un-manageability of the problem, self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects (public confession), restitution for harm done, and working with others.

The Oxford Group was not confined to members of alcoholics only; a mixed bag of 'troubled souls' were also welcomed.

A chance meeting with Ebby Thacher, another chronic alcoholic who was about to be admitted to a Lunatic Asylum; Rowland H passed on the message Dr. Jung gave him: that most alcoholics were non-receptive to psychiatry and medicine; that their only possible hope was a spiritual conversion with a religious group of their choice. So now we have one alcoholic trying to help another alcoholic stay sober. Rowland H introduced Ebby T to the Oxford Group at Calvary Rescue Mission.

In keeping with Oxford Group teaching that a new convert ... *(continued on page 3)*...

**HOTLINE 352-621-0599**

## Steps | Traditions | Concepts

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

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Tradition 6: An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

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Concept 6: The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.



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... (continued from front page...) must pass on the message to other suffering and troubled souls to preserve his own conversion experience, Ebby contacted his old friend Bill Wilson, who he knew had a drinking problem.

When Ebby visited Bill Wilson at his New York apartment, it was sometime in November 1934. Sitting at his kitchen table, Bill offered him a drink. 'No thanks' said Ebby, 'I stopped drinking'. 'I stopped drinking' coming from Ebby seemed the strangest thing Bill had heard. Glancing over at Ebby, Bill knew that this was no "on the water-wagon stop." Ebby was clear-eyed, focused and serene.

"What's got into you"? Bill asked. Ebby told him "he had got religion," Bill's heart sank. Until then, Bill had struggled with the existence of God. Much later of his meeting with Ebby, he wrote: "My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, 'Why don't you choose your own conception of God?' That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years."

Ebby then went on to share about his meeting with Rowland H, how hopeless in most cases psychiatry and medicine was in the opinion of Dr. Jung. Next Ebby enumerated the principles he had learned from the Oxford Group. Though he thought that the good people of the Group were sometimes too aggressive, he couldn't find fault with most of their basic teachings. In substance, the basic principles an alcoholic desiring to stop drinking should follow are:



Bill Wilson

1. He admitted that he is powerless to manage his own life.
2. He became honest with himself as never before; made an "examination of conscience."
3. He made a rigorous confession of his personal defects and thus quit living alone with his problems.
4. He surveyed his distorted relations with other people, visiting them to make what amends he could.
5. He resolved to devote himself to helping others in need, without the usual demand for personal prestige or material gain.
6. By meditation, he sought God's direction for his life and the help to practice these principals of conduct at all times.

Ebby explained how, practicing these simple precepts, his drinking had unaccountably stopped. Fear and isolation had left him, and he received a considerable peace of mind. Once again, one alcoholic confiding in another alcoholic; the spark that was to become Alcoholics Anonymous had been struck. When Ebby left, Bill continued to drink.

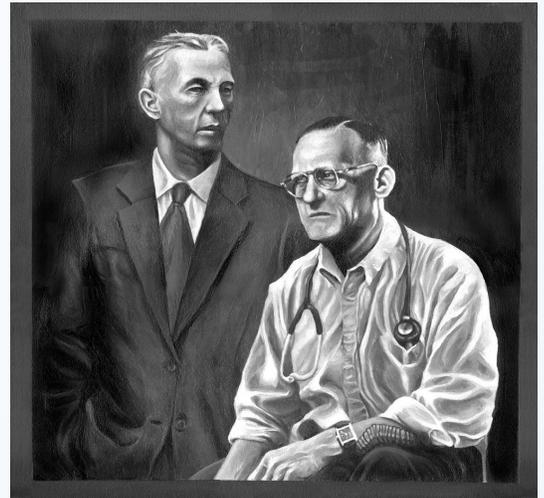
The next morning Bill Wilson arrived at Calvary Rescue Mission in a drunken state looking for Ebby. Once there, he attended his first Oxford Group meeting, where he answered the call to come to the altar and, along with other penitents, gave his life to Christ. Bill excitedly told his wife Lois about his spiritual progress, yet the next day he drank again and a few days later readmitted himself to Towns Hospital for the fourth and last time.

Bill Wilson was an alcoholic who had seen a promising career on Wall Street ruined by his drinking. He also failed to graduate from law school because he was too drunk ...*(continued on page 4)*

... (continued from page 3)... to pick up his diploma. His drinking damaged his marriage, and he was hospitalized for alcoholism at Towns Hospital four times in 1933-1934 under the care of Dr. William Silkworth.

On Bill Wilson's first stay at Towns Hospital, Dr. Silkworth explained to him his theory that alcoholism is an illness rather than a moral failure or failure of willpower. Silkworth believed that alcoholics were suffering from a mental obsession, combined with an allergy that made compulsive drinking inevitable, and to break the cycle one had to completely abstain from alcohol use. Wilson was elated to find that he suffered from an illness, and he managed to stay off alcohol for a month before he resumed drinking again.

While at Towns Hospital for the fourth and last time after his friend Ebby had visited him, Bill experienced his "Hot Flash" spiritual conversion. While lying in bed depressed and despairing, Bill cried out: "I'll do anything! Anything at all to receive what my friend Ebby has! If there be a God, let Him show Himself!" He then had the sensation of a bright light, a feeling of ecstasy, and a new serenity. Bill described his experience to Dr. Silkworth, who told him that this could be a transformation, an emotional upheaval or a spiritual experience.



**Bill W. & Dr. Bob**

Upon his release from the hospital on December 18, 1934, Bill Wilson moved from the Calvary Rescue Mission to the Oxford meetings at Calvary House. There Wilson socialized after the meetings with other ex-drinking Oxford Group members and became interested in learning how to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. It was during this time that Bill Wilson went on a crusade to save alcoholics. Sources for his prospects were the Calvary Rescue Mission and Towns Hospital. Something like a religious crank he was obsessed with the idea that everybody must have a "spiritual experience" like he had. Of all the alcoholics Bill Wilson tried to help, not one stayed sober.

It was Dr. Silkworth who pointed out to Bill, he said: "Stop preaching to them. Just tell them what happened to you. Give them the medical facts, the mental obsession, combined with an allergy that made compulsive drinking inevitable.

Five months after his spiritual experience, Bill W went on a business trip to Akron -- away from home. The business venture failed. He found himself dejected and depressed standing in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel. At one end of the lobby the hotel bar was opened. At the other end there was a telephone booth.

Suddenly the urge for a drink came upon him. He panicked! The feeling of panic assured him he still had some sanity left. He remembered that while trying to help other alcoholics 'he' remained sober. So he took action. He phoned a number of church ministries in that area asking to meet and speak with another drunk. As puzzling as this must have seemed to the ones answering his calls, Bill W finally struck gold. A call to Episcopal minister Rev. Walter Tunks, got him in contact with an Oxford Group member Henrietta Seiberling, a non-alcoholic, whose group had been trying for two years to help a desperate alcoholic named Dr. Bob Smith. ...*(continued on page 7)*



## Those Crazy AA Slogans Set Me Free

By Steve N.

Part III



Not many people have heard the AA Serenity Prayer before they first attend an AA meeting...but once it's in your life, it never leaves. The "Serenity Prayer" written by theologian Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, provides simple wisdom for complicated people and puts the focus on acceptance and action.

Saying the prayer activates willingness and positivity. Thinking positively (instead of "Stinking Thinking") helps people find success in sobriety and avoid relapse.

### Breaking Down the Serenity Prayer

**God:** Most people in AA view recovery as a spiritual path, and the Serenity Prayer is a reminder they are not on a journey alone –that they can rely on a "higher power."



ACCEPTANCE IS THE ANSWER TO ALL OF 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 MY 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.

**Acceptance:** The serenity prayer reminds us that acceptance is the key to happiness. There are many things we have no power over—trying to fight against or resist the way things are is a waste of energy and only ever leads to suffering. Serenity comes with acceptance.

Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." He forgot to mention that I was the chief critic. I was always able to see the flaw in every person, every situation. And I was always glad to point it out, because I knew you wanted perfection, just as I did. A.A. taught me acceptance and that

that there is a bit of good in the worst of us and a bit of bad in the best of us; that we are all children of God and we each have a right to be here. When I complain about me or about you, I am complaining about God's handiwork. I am saying that I know better than God.

...(continued on page 6)...



**Courage:** Change requires courage because it is taking a step into the unknown. The reason why so many people settle for suffering is fear. Courage is required to keep on making the needed changes that will lead to a better life in sobriety.

In the *Twelve and Twelve, Step 11*, AA taught me, "He will also report that out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally, inescapably, the conviction came that God does "move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

**"They have found wisdom beyond their usual capability."**

- *12&12 Step Eleven, p.104*

**Wisdom:** The wisdom to know the difference in what is within our control may come from prayer and meditation or talking to others in sobriety. It's empowering for recovering alcoholics to come to believe there are many things they will be able to change, and they should take action when such actions will improve their life.



In his book, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, written in 1957, Bill Wilson recalled that final meeting, when he and Doctor Bob agreed that an annual conference featuring sober A.A. delegates from around the world was the way to lead the fellowship into the future.

"A few hours later I took my leave of Dr. Bob, knowing that the following week he was to undergo a very serious operation," he writes on page 214. "Neither of us dared say what was in our hearts. We both knew that this might well be the last decision that we would ever make together."

"I went down the steps and then turned to look back. Bob stood in the doorway, tall and upright as ever. Some color had come back to his cheeks, and he was carefully dressed in a light gray suit. This was my partner, the man with whom I never had a hard word. The wonderful, old, broad smile was on his face as he said almost jokingly, "Remember, Bill, let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple!" I turned away, unable to say a word. That was the last time I ever saw him."

Keep It Simple was a classic Dr. Bob saying. He urged members to stay away from overanalyzing the program, and to stick to love and service and spiritual matters as the answer to their dilemma.

CONTINUED IN NEXT MONTH'S JOURNAL ...

...(continued from page 4)... Dr. Bob started drinking early in life. While he was a student, Dr. Bob started drinking heavily and almost failed to graduate from medical school because of it. He opened a medical practice and married, but his drinking put his business and family life in jeopardy. For seventeen years Dr. Bob's daily routine was to stay sober until the afternoon, get drunk, sleep, then take sedatives to calm his morning jitters. During the prohibition period, 1920–1933 Doctors were permitted to prescribe liquor for their patients. Dr Bob would pick a name from the phone book, fill out a prescription, which would get him a pint of whisky. When this was not feasible, there was always that new member of American society –the bootlegger! It seems Dr. Bob had two phobias, one was the fear of not sleeping and the other of running out of liquor. His life was a squirrel-cage existence; staying sober to earn enough money to get drunk, getting drunk to go to sleep, using sedatives to quiet the jitters, staying sober, earning money, smuggling home a bottle, hiding the bottle from his wife, who became an expert at detecting hiding places.

So Henrietta Seiberling convinced Dr. Bob to come over to her place and meet Bill. And Dr. Bob insisted the meeting be limited to fifteen minutes. At five o'clock Sunday evening Dr. Bob and his wife were at Heneritta's house. Dr. Bob came face to face with Bill who said " You must be awfully thirsty -- this won't take us long." Dr. Bob was so impressed with Bill's knowledge of alcoholism and ability to share from his own experience, that their discussion lasted six hours. That was on Mothers Day, May 12th 1935. Dr. Bob did lapse into drinking again. He went on a binge, but quickly recovered. The day widely known as the date of Dr. Bob's last drink, June 10, 1935, is celebrated as the founding date of Alcoholics Anonymous.

A few days later, Dr. Bob had said to Bill: "If you and I are going to stay sober, we had better get busy." Dr. Bob called Akron 's City Hospital and told the nurse, a "Mrs. Hall," that he and a man from New York had a cure for alcoholism. Did she have an alcoholic customer on whom they could try it out? She replied, "Well, Doctor, I suppose you've already tried it yourself?" Then she told him of a man who had just come in with DT's, had blacked the eyes of two nurses, and was now strapped down tight. "He's a grand chap when he's sober," she added. The nurse told Dr. Bob and Bill that Bill Dotson, the patient, had been a well-known attorney in Akron and a city councilman. But he had been hospitalized eight times in the last six months. Following each release, he got drunk even before he got home.

So Dr. Bob and Bill talked to what is now known as their first "man on the bed." They told him of the serious nature of his disease, but also offered hope for a recovery. "We told him what we had done," wrote Bill, "how we got honest with ourselves as never before, how we had talked our problems out with each other in confidence, how we tried to make amends for harm done others, how we had then been miraculously released from the desire to drink as soon as we had humbly asked God, as we understood him, for guidance and protection. Bill Dotson, the "Man on the Bed, eventually sobered up, his date of sobriety was the date he entered Akron 's City Hospital for his last detox on June 26th 1935.

-Submitted by Dean B.

## **Join Us This Founder's Day!**

**Area 14 & District 28 Present A short oral history of**

**Alcoholics Anonymous,**

**Followed by discussion Wednesday 6/10/2020**

**Noon Meeting ID 368 653 988 Password 920262**

**Or 4:00 PM Meeting ID 269 576 500 Password 352**

## INTERGROUP & DISTRICT 28 NEWS

Shepherd of the Hills Church in Lecanto will be having a board meeting on June 15 to schedule a reopening. We are confident therefore that we will be back to Business as usual for the July Meeting. In the meantime however we will not be having the June Business Meeting which was scheduled for the 7th..Hopefully we will all be able to go back to our new normal for the July Meetings. In the interim stay safe, wear a mask, practice social distancing, and in the words of that famous AA guru "THIS TOO SHALL PASS".

-Denis S/Intergroup Secretary.

## **UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES**

### **JUNE 2020**

#### **SOBER SAND GNATS**

#### **JUNE**

Keith K.	17
Mikey	16

#### **WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP GROUP**

#### **JUNE**

Eleanor W.	52
Wanda B.	39

#### **REAL HAPPY HOUR**

#### **JUNE**

Michael B.	32
Michael D.	6
Rich M.	4

## **WE NEED YOUR STORIES!**

Tell us about "what it was like, what happened and what it is like now."  
In upcoming issues, Nature Coast Journal will publish your stories about:

Laughter and Fun in Sobriety, Balance in and out of AA , The Steps ,

Living Your Dreams In Sobriety ,AA Humor/ Jokes

Send us stories on any topic sobriety

related!

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