



NATURE COAST JOURNAL

APRIL 2021



Nature Coast Intergroup Presents:

SPRING FLING

**Saturday, May 8th, 2021
2-6pm**

**Whispering Pines Park
1700 Forest Drive
Inverness, FL 34453
Main Pavillion (Parking Area B)
ADMISSION IS FREE**

**Hot Dogs, Hamburgers & Beverages Will Be
Served**

A Speaker & A 50/50 Raffle

**CDC Guidelines will be followed.
Bring a mask and a chair.**

**For more info or to volunteer contact
events@ncintergroup.com**

HOTLINE 352-621-0599

Steps | Traditions | Concepts

STEP 4

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

TRADITION 4

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole. ”

CONCEPT 4

“At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional ‘Right of Participation,’ allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge. ”

“What it was like, What happened, and What it is like now”

Your story could appear in an upcoming issue.

**Send your stories, poems, articles, and anniversary lists to
News@Ncintergroup.com**

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Beverly Hills, FL 34464

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North Florida Area Conference

(Please write District 28 and your group number on the check)

Make checks payable to NFAC and send to:
P.O. Box 10094
Jacksonville FL 32247

General Service Office

P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

The Story Behind the Jack Alexander Article on A.A.

On March 1, 1941, *The Saturday Evening Post* published an article titled “Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now They Free Others” written by Jack Alexander. The article became a major turning point in Alcoholics Anonymous’ history.

The story behind the article begins when the owner of *The Saturday Evening Post*, Judge Curtis Bok, learned of A.A. from two friends. He was interested in having the *Post* tell the story of the organization and called upon well-known journalist of *The Saturday Evening Post*, Jack Alexander, to do so.



Bill W., co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, eager to publicize the A.A. message, met with Alexander. He gave Alexander access to records, a tour of significant A.A. sights, and set up interviews with both nonalcoholic trustees of the General Service Board and A.A.s.

Correspondence between Jack Alexander and Bill W. from early 1941 shows the excitement felt in anticipation of the article’s release. On January 4, 1941, Alexander wrote to Bill W. and enclosed a manuscript of the article for Bill to read. On January 6 Bill replied and from his response the eagerness for the article’s release is apparent. Bill wrote:

I wish I could adequately convey to you the sense of gratitude that one of us feels towards you and the Saturday Post for what is about to take place. You can not possibly conceive the direct alleviation of so much misery as will be brought to an end through your pen and your good-publishers.

For many a day you will be the toast of A.A.- in coca cola, of course!

Following the March 1, 1941 release of the article, inquiries began to flood in, leaving the small staff of the “A.A.Headquarters,” the precursor to the General Service Office, busy. On March 12, 1941 Ruth Hock, first non-alcoholic secretary of A.A., wrote to Dr. Bob, A.A. co-founder, to update him on what was going on in New York. She said that the office had become swamped, 918 inquiries in 12 days as a direct response to the article.

The offices of *The Saturday Evening Post* also received a large number of inquiries. A March 26, 1941, bulletin by the *Post* relays the power behind the article.

“Following the publication of “Alcoholics Anonymous” by Jack Alexander, the Post floor received an unusually large mail from readers, much of it asking how contact could be established with groups who are doing this work in various cities. There were several instances of calls on our branch offices for information on local organizations of this unusual group.”

Eight years after the release of the wildly successful 1941 *Saturday Evening Post* article Bill W. wrote to Jack Alexander with a request. Bill W. was interested in a follow-up article and was hoping Alexander would write one, and on June 8, 1949, Bill W. wrote the following:

“If you can spare me a little time, I’d like to come down to Philadelphia and see you. Eight years ago the Saturday Evening Post took AA out of the pioneering stage and made it a movement. Uncounted thousands owe their great good fortune, yes their very lives, to what the Post did then. ...(continued on page 4)...

(continued from page 3)... We still ship reprints of your article by the carload. Nowadays AA rarely asks for publicity. I suppose we still get it in enormous quantities partly for that reason. Yet the time is here when an exception should be made.

The point of this letter is what I would definitely like to ask you folks a favor. Will you print another piece about us.

The general public has only the vaguest idea what our society really looks like. I think they would be interested in an inside view.

From our standpoint, a vital job has to be done. Now that the recovery formula is above ground and working at a prodigious rate, our main problem is that of maintaining our unity as a movement until every drunk in the world has had a good look at the idea.

So then, if John Q. Public could get an inside view of what our fellowship is really like, and it could become quite clear to him what good AA's do and what they don't do in their relationships with each other and with the outside world, the Saturday Evening Post would have written an insurance policy on our future, the value of which no men could ever reckon."

On June 9, Jack Alexander replied that he had always thought about writing a follow-up but had never gotten around to it. He also writes that there is trouble with the idea and says:



"There is basic trouble about it, though; I don't see, offhand, where there is enough new material to justify a second look. True, the number of AA's has ballooned enormously, but that in itself is merely statistical. The basic story—the psychology of drinkers, how the AA's work on them, the steps towards arresting the habit—remains unchanged; or so it seems to me."

On December 13, 1949 Bill W. wrote to Jack Alexander outlining the major turning points in the AA movement which included the decision to leave the Oxford Group, about Rockefeller insisting they did not need money, the formation of the Alcoholic Foundation, and the first two chapters of the Big Book.

For the next few months Bill W. and Jack Alexander corresponded regarding corrections that either of them thought needed to be made to the article. Finally, eight months after Bill W. initially presented Jack Alexander with the proposed idea for a follow-up, the article was released. "The Drunkard's Best Friend" was published in the April 1, 1950 issue ... (continued on page 5)...

... (continued from page 4)... of *The Saturday Evening Post*. "The Drunkard's Best Friend" was a success, just as its predecessor was. On April 22, 1950, Bill W. wrote to Ben Bibbs, editor of *The Saturday Evening Post*, in praise of Jack Alexander and the two articles. Bill wrote as follows:

"Jack Alexander, in his recent Saturday Evening Post story "The Drunkard's Friend," has done it again.

We of Alcoholics Anonymous wish to tell how immensely grateful every man-jack of us is for this happy circumstance. It is not the least exaggeration to say that Jack's "Alcoholics Anonymous" article of nine years ago brought recovery within the reach of 10000 alcoholics and great happiness to as many homes. Since the public impression of this last piece of Jack's is tops, we make no doubt that it will accomplish a fine result.

We know that the whole world will one day agree that these two articles of Jack's about A.A. are to be regarded the greatest public service the Saturday Evening Post has ever done. And that's saying a great deal, indeed."

When Jack Alexander passed away in 1975 he was credited in his *West Texas Register* obituary as the newspaperman who made "Alcoholics Anonymous a major organization by the articles he wrote about its work." Today, the General Service Office Archives still receives inquiries requesting both articles.

Note: [A.A. World Services publishes the 1941 article in pamphlet format and sells approximately 22,000 a year.

-Submitted by Dean B.

F.Y.I.

**Nature Coast Intergroup and District 28 Business Meetings
Will Be Held**

**Sunday April 11th at 4.30pm (District Meeting Immediately
Following Intergroup)**

**Located at Beverly Hills Community Center, 82 Civic Circle,
Beverly Hills, FL 34465**

All Are Welcome!

Tradition Four

by Bill W

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

AUTONOMY is a ten-dollar word. But in relation to us, it means very simply that every AA group can manage its affairs exactly as it pleases, except when AA as a whole is threatened. Comes now the same question raised in Tradition One. Isn't such liberty foolishly dangerous?

Over the years every conceivable deviation from our Twelve Steps and Traditions has been tried. That was sure to be, since we are so largely a band of ego-driven individualists. Children of chaos, we have defiantly played with every brand of fire, only to emerge unharmed and, we think, wiser. These very deviations created a vast process of trial and error which, under the grace of God, has brought us to where we stand today.

When AA's Traditions were first published in 1945, we had become sure that an AA group could stand almost any amount of battering. We saw that the group, exactly like the individual, must eventually conform to whatever tested principles would guarantee survival. We had discovered that there was perfect safety in the process of trial and error. So confident of this had we become that the original statement of AA tradition carried this significant sentence: "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that as a group they have no other affiliation."

This meant, of course, that we had been given the courage to declare each AA group an individual entity, strictly reliant on its own conscience as a guide to action. In charting this enormous expanse of freedom we found it necessary to post only two storm signals. A group ought not do anything which would greatly injure AA as a whole, nor ought it affiliate itself with anything or anybody else. There would be real danger should we commence to call some groups "wet," others "dry," still others "Republican" or "Communist," and yet others "Catholic" or "Protestant." The AA group would have to stick to its course or be hopelessly lost. Sobriety had to be its sole objective. In all other respects there was perfect freedom of will and action. Every group had the right to be wrong.

When AA was still young, lots of eager groups were forming. In a town we'll call Middleton, a real crackerjack had started up. The townspeople were hot as firecrackers about it. Star-gazing, the elders dreamed of innovations. They figured the town needed a great big alcoholic center, a kind of pilot plant AA groups could duplicate everywhere. Beginning on the ground floor there would be a club; in the second story they would sober up drunks and hand them currency for their back debts; the third deck would house an educational project. . .quite noncontroversial, of course. In imagination the gleaming center was to go up several stories more, but three would do for a start. This would all take a lot of money. . .other people's money. Believe it or not, wealthy townsfolk bought the idea.

There were, though, a few conservative dissenters among the alcoholics. They wrote the Foundation, AA's headquarters in New York, wanting to know about this sort of streamlining. They understood that the elders, just to nail things down good, were about to apply to the Foundation for a charter. These few were disturbed and skeptical.

Of course there was a promoter in the deal. . .a super-promoter. By his eloquence he allayed all fears, despite advice from the Foundation that it could issue no charter, and that ventures which mixed an AA group up with medication and education had come to ... (continued on page 7)..

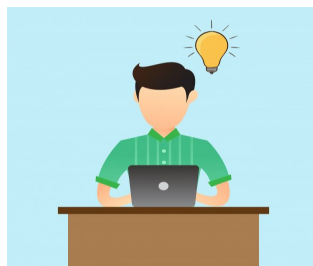
... (continued from page 6)... sticky ends elsewhere. To make things safer, the promoter organized three corporations and became president of them all. Freshly painted, the new center shone. The warmth of it all spread through the town. Soon things began to hum. To insure foolproof, continuous operation, 61 rules and regulations were adopted.

But alas, this bright scene was not long in darkening. Confusion replaced serenity. It was found that some drunks yearned for education, but doubted if they were alcoholics. The personality defects of others could be cured maybe with a loan. Some were club-minded, but it was just a question of taking care of the lonely heart. Sometimes the swarming applicants would go for all three floors. Some would start at the top and come through to the bottom, becoming club members, others started in the club, pitched a binge, were hospitalized, then graduated to education on the third floor. It was a beehive of activity, all right, but unlike a beehive, it was confusion compounded. An AA group, as such, simply couldn't handle this sort of a project. All too late that was discovered. Then came the inevitable explosion. . .something like that day the boiler burst in Wombley's Clapboard Factory. A chill choke-damp of fear and frustration fell over the group.

When that lifted, a wonderful thing had happened. The head promoter wrote the Foundation office. He said he wished he'd paid some attention to AA experience. Then he did something else that was to become an AA classic. It all went on a little card about golf-score size. The cover read: "Middleton Group No. One. Rule No. 62." Once the card was unfolded, a single pungent sentence leaped to the eye: "Don't take yourself too damn seriously."

Thus it was that under Tradition Four an AA group had exercised its right to be wrong. Moreover, it had performed a great service for Alcoholics Anonymous, because it had been humbly willing to apply the lessons it learned. It had picked itself up with a laugh and gone on to better things. Even the chief architect, standing in the ruins of his dream, could laugh at himself. . .and that is the very acme of humility.

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UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES

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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 brief stories about:

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

Living Your Dreams In Sobriety , AA Humor/ Jokes

Send your stories on any sobriety

related topic!

e-mail: news@ncintergroup.com