

**A Society  
of  
Alcoholics  
in  
Action  
in  
New Zealand**

# **How the AA Message was Carried**

The growth and development  
of the AA Service Structure  
in New Zealand.  
1946-1976

First Edition 1985

Second edition

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## Notes

*In the absence of an acceptable unisex pronoun, the reader is asked to insert 'he' or 'she' in the text as appropriate.*

*To the memory of*

***Bobbie B.***

*Who, as Ian's sponsor, was there  
at the beginning.*

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— Frequent recourse has been made to Alcoholics World Services, Inc publications. Extracts from the following have been reprinted by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc:

The Twelve Steps; The Twelve Traditions; The Preamble; The Serenity Prayer; The Toronto Declaration; "AA's Legacy of Service" by Bill W.; "AA Comes of Age," 1979; "Guidelines," Vol 26, No.4, Aug-Sept 1981; "The AA Way of Life" by Bill W. 1967; "How AA Members Co-operate with other Community efforts to help Alcoholics" 1974; "AA 30 A Book About AA's 30th Anniversary Year and International Convention", 1965; Where the quotation appears in the text, reference is made to the Notes for each chapter.

## **PREAMBLE**

*ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS® is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.*

- *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.*

- *AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.*

- *Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1972 Ian McE., the first person in New Zealand to recover from the disease of alcoholism through Alcoholics Anonymous, was asked by the members to write the history of the fellowship. Ian agreed, but ill health forced a postponement of the project. Later, with Ian's help, the work was begun again and much of the material in the early chapters is based upon his taped recollections and notes.

Little did Ian know when he wrote to New York in January 1946 for information about AA that he was to spend most of his time over the next 30 years fostering the growth of the fellowship. The following story is a tribute to his work.

Over the last few years, AA has encouraged and appointed voluntary archivists in the regions who are now collecting, recording and organising personal recollections and group histories before the passage of time removes forever the early members of the fellowship which, of necessity and by nature, eschews written records. Where group histories are included they are illustrative and not exhaustive accounts of the way in which the message was carried often at considerable personal sacrifice.



## CHAPTER I

# The Beginnings

The essence of the fellowship is expressed in the encounter between one sober alcoholic and another still suffering from the disease of alcoholism. An event which takes place within the context of a simple organisational framework.

Firstly, why service? Why does the fellowship of AA place such emphasis on this concept? And what does it mean in practice? The answers to these questions are best given by Bill W. the co-founder of AA, in the AA Service Manual:

*"Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives; this is the principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth my die.*

*"Hence, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to AA's General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.*

*"Services include meeting places, hospital co-operation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.*

*"These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or AA as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make AA more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion.*

*"Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: 'Is this service really needed?' If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek AA".<sup>1</sup>*

In this introductory chapter we describe AA itself, the influences which gave it shape and the people whose insights and encouragement made it possible for the American co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob to first find their own sobriety and to lead the way for hundreds of thousands after them to recover from the ravages of alcoholism.

Whilst AA sees its founding moment on 10 June 1935<sup>2</sup> when Dr. Bob had his last drink, other events led up to and gave significance to that occasion. The first person to play a part was Carl Jung, the great psychiatrist practising in Zurich, Switzerland in the early 1930's. He had as a patient a young man, Rowland H., a person of considerable ability and wealth. After a year of treatment for alcoholism in 1932 Rowland left Zurich but soon returned, his condition unimproved. It was then that Carl Jung told his patient "there might be

<sup>1</sup>The phrase 'founding moments' was coined by Ernest Kurtz to describe the confluence of events and perceptions making up the philosophy of AA.

## The Beginnings

hope for recovery, if (the alcoholic) could undergo a transforming experience of the spirit.”<sup>3</sup> On his return to New York Rowland found such an experience in the Oxford Groups.<sup>4</sup>

He attended the United States Headquarters of the movement, at The Calvary Episcopal Church of Rev. Dr Samuel Shoemaker, who was later to become one of AA’s most influential and important friends.<sup>5</sup> Whilst the Oxford Groups themselves were not particularly involved with helping alcoholics,<sup>6</sup> Rowland saw an opportunity to pass on his own experiences and, in August 1934, went bail for and led an old friend, Ebby T., into the movement just as the latter was to be shut away in an institution because of his drinking. Ebby ‘got the message’ and, in the first flush of enthusiasm, turned to help the most hopeless drunk he knew — Bill W. an old boarding school friend. This meeting between Ebby T. and Bill was another founding moment in AA. Whilst Bill could not, at this point, accept the religious aspect of Ebby’s message, two things stuck in his mind — here was ‘hopeless’ Ebby looking wonderful and, after mentioning God once he referred more often to ‘another power’ or a ‘higher power’ — one could choose one’s own concept of ‘God’.<sup>7</sup>

Bill, who was in the middle of what was to be his last bender, decided to follow up the Oxford Groups himself but was first admitted to Towns Hospital, Manhattan in order to dry out. Ebby visited again, this time bringing with him a copy of William James’ ‘Varieties of Religious Experience.’ From this book Bill gained another insight central to AA’s philosophy. As he was to recall later:<sup>8</sup>

*“It was rather difficult reading for me, but I devoured it from cover to cover. Spiritual experiences, James thought, could have objective reality; almost like gifts from the blue, they could transform people. Some were sudden brilliant illuminations; others came on very gradually. Some flowed out of religious channels; others did not. But nearly all had the great common denominators of pain, suffering, calamity. Complete hopelessness and deflation at depth were almost always required to make the recipient ready. The significance of all this burst upon me. Deflation at depth — yes, that was it. Exactly that had happened to me. Dr. Carl Jung had told an Oxford Group friend of Ebby’s how hopeless his alcoholism was and Dr. Silkworth had passed the same sentence upon me. Then Ebby, also an alcoholic, had handed me the identical dose. On Dr. Silkworth’s say-so alone maybe I would never have completely accepted the verdict but when Ebby came along and one alcoholic began to talk to another, that clinched it.*

*“My thoughts began to race as I envisaged a chain reaction among alcoholics, one carrying this message and these principles to the next. More than I could ever want anything else, I now knew that I wanted to work with other alcoholics.”*

*‘In the kinship of common suffering, one alcoholic had been talking to another.’<sup>9</sup>*

## *The Beginnings*

There remained one more element to complete the understanding of the recovery process later to become the AA programme; the contribution of Dr. W.D. Silkworth. Bill had been admitted four times between 1933 and 1934 to the Charles B. Towns Hospital, a private institution specialising in alcoholism and drug dependency where Dr. Silkworth was medical director. It was the doctor who introduced Bill to the concept of alcoholism as a disease — a pathological craving. 'An obsession of the mind that condemns one to drink and an allergy of the body that condemns one to die.' From Dr. Silkworth Bill had learned that his "was a hopeless, progressive, irreversible case of alcoholism — an obsession that condemned him to drink against his will, and an allergy-like sensitivity to alcohol."<sup>9</sup> It was Dr. Silkworth too, who pointed out to Bill when he later began working with other alcoholics using the Oxford Group concepts, that his lack of success came about through plugging the four absolutes<sup>4</sup> too early which frightened people away. Better, he said, to remember the message from Carl Jung through Rowland to Ebby — "deflate those tough egos deep down; tell them the medical bit and give it to them hard. Only then can you begin to try out your other medicine, the ethical principles you have picked up from the Oxford Groups."<sup>10</sup>

The chance to put these new insights into practice soon came. Stranded in Akron, Ohio on 11 May 1935 after losing a company proxy fight, which if, successful, would have put him back on Wall Street, Bill W. turned for help to the only people he knew might help him in a strange city — the Oxford Groupers. Through the Rev. Mr. Walter Tunks Bill spoke on the telephone to a non-alcoholic member of the Oxford Groups, Mrs Henrietta Seiberling. With her help a meeting was arranged for next day with a prominent Akron surgeon, Dr. Bob and the two met for the first time at the gatehouse of the Seiberling estate. Through alcohol, Dr. Bob's career was on the rocks. Over the next few weeks he and Bill shared their experiences to such good effect that Dr. Bob took his last drink on 10 June 1935, the date which AA sees as its founding time.<sup>11</sup>

AA did not completely sever its links with the Oxford Group until the northern summer of 1939. There was much in the Oxford Group's programme which proved unacceptable to AA's; at the same time there is a freely acknowledged debt to that movement.<sup>12</sup>

In 1961 Bill W. and Carl Jung exchanged letters, published, slightly edited, for the fellowship in the 'AA Grapevine' of January 1963 and 1968. In these letters both writers agreed on the substance of Carl Jung's advice to Rowland H. In Bill's words, "the conversation between you (and Rowland) . . . was to become the first link in the chain of events that led to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous." Two points were made to Jung's patient, "first of all, you frankly told him of his hopelessness, so far as any further medical or psychiatric treatment might be concerned." Secondly, Jung had talked of "a spiritual or religious experience — in short, a genuine conversation," pointing out at the same time, "that while such experiences had sometimes brought recovery to alcoholics, they were . . . comparatively rare."<sup>13</sup>

## **CHAPTER 2**

### ***1946 to 1950***

Early members scattered throughout New Zealand

## Early Members

Our story covers the thirty years — 1946 to 1976. It is appropriate to begin and end with the 30th Anniversary Dinner, when the fellowship paused to celebrate the achievements of the past. Ian McE, the first person in New Zealand to achieve Sobriety through the AA programme, spoke to the gathering:<sup>1</sup>

*"I think it would be appropriate tonight if I repeated the story of how AA was brought to me. It is a simple story of what happened. In 1945 I was living with my wife and our family in Richmond, Nelson. I had one of those wives who is most common amongst alcoholics, who stuck to me through thick and thin, and some of it was pretty thin too. I was the son of well-to-do parents, who tried everything to help me in my problem as I gradually slipped into the grip of alcohol. I was at one time committed to the Island\* for a year. This treatment was only abstinence and was quite ineffective. Within two months of returning to civilisation I was back drinking again, as is common with our story of alcoholics.*

*"At Richmond we were running a small citrus farm. When I first came off the Island I got the idea that going to the country to do some farming might help me to get rid of my trouble. How I thought this would help I really don't know. It was just that I had the idea that farmers were a better sort of people from the average and, of course, they would not be alcoholic. But I was to find, to my surprise, that they made very good alcoholics.*

*"In 1945, I had been an active advanced alcoholic for some 20 years and our situation at home, and, of course, on the farm, was like any alcoholics. "One day I went to Nelson, as was my custom, and I went the rounds of the pubs and down to one of my favourite places and had a session there. In those days I was a very big man, some 18 stone, and when I got tired and sleepy I passed out. Although I was not a fighting drunk, I was quite a problem to move.*

*"At this stage, for some reason I don't understand at all, I walked out of this pub and up to the local psychiatric hospital. I found the Superintendent sitting on the verandah, which was unusual for him — he was a very busy man — but he knew me and he knew the family and again, for some reason I don't quite understand, I asked to be admitted. He was not very keen on this. Of course, as you know, to admit you as a voluntary patient you are supposed to be in a state to make a sensible decision. Anyway, he rang my wife, and I didn't know this for some months after, but he said to her, 'Ian's here, he wants to come in, what shall I do?' and she said, 'If you can get him, you grab him!' and so I was admitted as a voluntary patient. I had never been in a hospital of this sort before, either as a visitor or as a patient, and I had all the usual prejudices against them, and the only treatment they could give me was to sober me up and get me working round the place."*

*Ian recalled: "one day I was in the reading room and I picked up a copy of the Readers' Digest<sup>2</sup> and read an article called, 'Maybe You can do it too' by Edward McGoldrick<sup>3</sup> who had been an alcoholic and had recovered*

<sup>1</sup>Rotorua Island.

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through the help of an organisation known as Alcoholics Anonymous.

*"I was able to identify with McGoldrick from this article as I had never identified before. Of course I had been told that I was just a drunk for years and years, and the idea of the disease concept of alcoholism was not known in New Zealand at that time."*

*Ian continues, "I was able to see that I was exactly like him, I drank like he did, I thought like he did and he had recovered and recommended that anybody in this situation who was wanting help, to get in touch with Alcoholics Anonymous. So this I did."*<sup>4</sup>

Ian was able to write directly as the address of Alcoholics Anonymous — P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York, was given at the foot of the article. In his letter to New York, sent from Richmond, Nelson, on 3 January 1946, Ian took the first step to his own recovery and Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand was born.

In his letter Ian did two things now known to be essential to recovery — firstly, he acknowledged that he was an alcoholic; "I have been an alcoholic for the past ten years and all efforts to date have failed to cure the habit." Secondly, he asked for help. Ian traced the history of his efforts to get well; "I went to England in 1938 and was treated by injections at the Institute of Endocrinology and had many interviews with a neurologist without producing any permanent result." Ian also described his efforts to get to Edward McGoldrick's Bureau in New York only to be thwarted when "advice finally came through . . . that at the present time this could not be arranged as the bureau was a part of the New York Welfare Department and only dealt with certain cases through the N.Y. courts." Ian's letter was replied to by Bobbie B., secretary of the General Service Office of AA, New York on 1 March 1946 and there began a remarkable correspondence over the next ten years which helped to keep Ian sober whilst AA in New Zealand grew slowly around him. The staff in New York changed over the years but the sustaining, supporting letters continued, each writer picking up without a break where the other had left off.

In her first reply Bobbie told Ian about AA; how it was avocational except for the small National Headquarters in New York — "Our 725 groups throughout the world are run by the members themselves." She enclosed a reprint of Jack Alexander's article<sup>5</sup> and sent, under separate cover, other literature, "which will give you a clear idea of AA and how it works." Bobbie went on to say, "if you are sincerely interested in finding a solution to your problem, I see no reason why you cannot practice AA even as far away as New Zealand. We have been successful in helping people in Honolulu and Australia, in fact, we have two groups in Australia now. This was built up simply through a few alcoholics who recovered themselves through AA and then helped others."

Not once, but a number of times, a well researched article in a mass circulation periodical has had a profound effect on the movement. This has happened both here and in America. By the spring of 1941 AA had 2,000 members in

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the United States. Following this, came overnight national recognition with the publication of a feature article in the *Saturday Evening Post* written by Jack Alexander. "As soon as the article appeared, 6,000 frantic enquiries hit our New York Post Office. Jack's piece made Alcoholics Anonymous a national institution."<sup>6</sup> This article, reprinted many times by AA as a pamphlet and still used today, was the one chosen by Bobbie B. to send to Ian in the first letter to him from New York.

It was Bobbie, also, who "for several years faced almost single-handed the huge aftermath of group problems that followed in the wake of Jack Alexander's article. Writing thousands of letters to struggling individuals and wobbly new groups, she made all the difference during that time when it seemed very uncertain that AA would hang together at all."<sup>7</sup> No sign of the strain of this time shows in her caring thoughtful letters to Ian. On 17 May, 1946, Bobbie wrote to Ian, "I'm delighted that our AA program seems to hit the nail on the head for you . . . don't for one moment let it discourage you to think you are all alone in New Zealand. Eleven years ago Bill Wilson was all alone in the world with just an idea for sobriety and not too much faith that it would work." Bobbie forwarded by surface mail lists of all the groups in the world and suggested that Ian write to Bill O' in Sydney, the AA secretary there. When writing again to Bobbie at a later date, (17 August, 1946) Ian reported the receipt of a long letter from Bill. Thus began Ian's wide correspondence with AA's in New Zealand and many parts of the world. Sometimes he was given the address of a new group in another country and was encouraged to share with them his own experience in starting out alone. Bobbie also wrote, "we are putting a star on our map today for New Zealand and you are 'it'. This simply means we consider you our AA representative for Richmond, New Zealand and when we get any enquiries from people in your vicinity, we will ask you to follow them up." Ian felt very good about this.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that, whilst the correspondence between Ian and G.S.O. went air-mail, Bobbie was unable to enclose any literature which made the letter heavier than half an ounce. Everything else had to go by surface. At this time, with great pressure on the New York office, many groups, pre-occupied with their own affairs, could not, or did not, help with central finances and the meagre budget was stretched to carry the message to isolated alcoholics in other places.<sup>9</sup> By the time Ian wrote to New York it had been proved that AA principles could be transmitted by mail. There was initial uncertainty, "maybe AA was just a Yankee gadget that would be no good for Ireland, England, Holland, Scandinavia, Australia or the Pacific."<sup>10</sup>

AA began in New Zealand just as the American members were getting their house in order after the chaotic growth which followed publication of Jack Alexander's article. The service to the society as a whole — the printing of pamphlets, distribution of the Big Book, the answering of pleas for help, responses to requests for guidance on group problems and the working through to a coherent public relations policy had built up both a wealth of experience and a simple organisational structure.<sup>11</sup>

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AA started in Ireland in 1946; in England, the beginnings were made in 1947; and, nearer home, Australia could boast two members by late 1944.<sup>12</sup> Ian had become a link in an international movement.

There were real fears that quarrels over leadership, money and membership would place such a strain on the fellowship that it might collapse. Drinking alcoholics are not noted either for their stability or confidence in making lasting relationships. Whilst membership would bring some measure of calm to otherwise erratic individuals, a way had to be found for them to somehow learn to live and work together. AA unity was crucial and would come about through shared experience. The solution was to set down in book form the way in which the programme worked. When the membership of AA was only 100 people, all in America, the so called Big Book<sup>13</sup> 'Alcoholics Anonymous' was written. The foreward to the first edition states: "We of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary."

The book gave Ian his blueprint for recovery and he spent almost two years in Nelson reading and working the programme before work with others began to bear fruit. The first edition told the stories of twenty-eight alcoholics who had recovered through AA. The authors had felt the need to "produce evidence in the form of living proof, written testimonials of our membership itself. It was felt also that the story section could identify us with the distant reader in a way that the text itself might not."<sup>14</sup> Ian recalled: "In this book I was further able to identify with being an alcoholic, and particularly with one of the case histories."<sup>15</sup>

The book was published in 1939 and was to be Ian's constant companion for the rest of his life. Pat Mc. writing in the September, 1976 issue of 'Grapevine' recounts the impact it had both on Ian and the development of AA in New Zealand. Bobbie had written <sup>16</sup> "One of our Trustees who has lived and travelled extensively in New Zealand is particularly interested in the start of AA in your country. He has asked me to send you a book with his compliments." This was the Big Book and Ian's copy received such constant use over the years that it fell apart, and rather than part with it, a bookbinder made repairs.

On 16 July, 1946, Ian wrote to Bobbie, "this morning I've had one of my bluest mornings. I thought I couldn't hang out, but with the aid of the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous' and a little prayer the day looked fine and I thought a letter to you to start with would be a good idea." Ian described a disastrous trip north when he had a slip on the way and had to crawl back home feeling defeated. There waiting for him, was the big Book, a bundle of pamphlets and a letter from Bobbie in which she said, "for a little while I shall probalby have to be the AA (member) who will act as your sponsor. A sponsor usually has many privileges like those of taking his friend to AA meetings and introducing



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him personally to the program. We'll have to do this by mail and it has been done before so we know it works — Good Luck!"<sup>17</sup>

Ian always wrote to Bobbie when he felt low just as alcoholics telephone, write or go and talk to another alcoholic when tensions rise. Bobbie's responses were so perceptive and answered his needs so accurately, for a long time he suspected that his wife Heather was also writing behind his back!<sup>18</sup>

Over the years Ian wrote thousands of letters to AA's all over New Zealand. Early members were widely scattered. The first gathering was held at Ian's little farm at Wakefield during Easter (25-30 March), 1948 when five members spent time together. They came from different parts of New Zealand; from Auckland in the north to Dunedin in the south. But such gatherings were rare.

Money was short and many times Ian spoke of the difficulty he had in getting enough cash together to make an important trip. The solution was to make and maintain links by letter. One AA member writing in 1977, recalled his first letter from Ian, who was his sponsor, which he had received in 1952:

*"In reply to your inquiry regarding AA, I enclose some literature on our approach to the problem. AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help each other to recover from alcoholism. AA believes that no one can stop a man drinking if he does not want to — our experience is that no matter how bad a man has become, if he will admit he is an alcoholic, and is up against a problem that he cannot solve on his own, then there is every chance that he can recover. We have all been through the "winger" — hundreds of times we have said "never again", and tried hard too, only to find that within weeks or months we were in the middle of another bender before we quite realised we had started. If you feel all alone and burdened down with problems like no one else had to deal with or carry, then you can be sure that there are many others in New Zealand who were in just that position, and have found a way to live reasonably happy and useful lives without alcohol. My wife had left me and taken the children — I had lost my job and was in a serious financial jamb. I had been to many doctors and was in many institutions, but there seemed to be no answer. Unfortunately we have no active AA member in your town, but there is one thirty miles away and he is sure to call when he knows of you. I will come up at the first opportunity. If you admit you are an alcoholic and want to do something about it write again and tell me a bit about yourself. We have no medication or pills or anything of that nature and know of no effective treatment by that method. Strange as it may seem recovery appears to start from admission of defeat and then facing one's problems in the light of AA experience. There are no fees or charges of any sort in AA — helping others has been found the best possible therapy for keeping we older ones on the beam and we always welcome an opportunity to help another who wants help. But we will not try and convince you that you*

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*need help or that we have the answer — you must decide that, and with our help try to apply the AA programme and find out what we so much enjoy. If you are an alcoholic, then sobriety is the most important thing in the world to you. We attained it — maybe you can too. Let's hear more from you. Yours sincerely, Ian, 6 Sept. 1952."*

The AA member who forwarded me this letter, went on to say:

*"The above letter has remained close by me for the past 25 years and has been of great comfort when I needed it most. It has served me well many times as a private AA meeting. The importance of this letter is that AA really works, as Bill W. would say, "By one alcoholic talking or writing to another." Yours sincerely, "Grateful", 6 September, 1977."*

Although Ian received his first copy of the Big Book in July, 1946 it was not the first copy to come into New Zealand. Gilbert Landsdown, an ardent prohibitionist, wrote from Auckland to John D. Rockefeller Jun. at the AA Box number in New York sometime in February, 1946 and received two complementary copies in April. These he promptly placed, the first in the Salvation Army library on Rotorua Island, the second in the Auckland Public Library. G.S.O. in New York asked Gilbert Landsdown to get in touch with Ian. Because of stringent post-war exchange control regulations, Landsdown was not able to obtain all the books he needed but over the next three years, 1946 to 1949, he proved an indefatigable correspondent, bombarding New York with requests for up to 25 Big Books at a time, all of which were placed in Public Libraries or sent directly, at his request, to individuals throughout New Zealand. New York were as generous as they could be in filling these orders, allowing for the strength of the American dollar and the fact that they had to accept payment with sets of Peace stamps, South African pounds and New Zealand money which was sent illegally. An example of a good man willing to break the law in a cause he cared about.<sup>19</sup>

By April 1947, Ian had made contact with two possible members.<sup>20</sup> They were both to slip badly later and it was not until February the following year that there were five members, "all on solid ground" and plans were being made to form the first group in New Zealand.<sup>21</sup>

The time between was taken up with the wide correspondence, gaining a deeper understanding of the AA programme and efforts made to carry the message. The first opportunity came with the arrival in New Zealand of the film "Problem Drinkers" in the MARCH OF TIME series. These were a very powerful set of documentary films on subjects of public interest and concern. Charlotte L. wrote from G.S.O., "I do hope you can see March of Time. There are quite a few pictures of our own office including all the girls who work here. You will see Bobbie's arm, and the back of my head — of course we must be anonymous!"<sup>22</sup> Ian wrote to the distributors and was eventually invited to Wellington where he met 36 of them and gave his first talk of this kind on AA. It was well received. Armed with advance showing dates he wrote to both the local newspapers and the theatres where the film was due to be

seen, but, except for Christchurch which brought a promising assortment of enquiries, nothing much came of the venture.

The film did produce a minor public relations crisis and Ian talked with New York about it. The Auckland showing was a month ahead of schedule and Ian's usual letters had not been sent. An "Auckland Star" writer reviewed the film and heaped derision on AA in his column. Gilbert Landsdown sent a cutting down from Auckland suggesting Ian reply. Ian guessed that such an article would be ignored in the States but here, "with the press being the power that it is and AA being almost unborn, a protest should be made." Gilbert Landsdown wrote to the "Star" as well and Ian's letter went unpublished. No further action was taken in spite of two more "equally silly paragraphs" by the columnist and Ian came to the conclusion that the film had hit a raw spot in the writer who was best left alone in the meantime.<sup>23</sup> Bobbie B. too, was sent a cutting by Gilbert Landsdown. The reaction from AA in New York was interesting and an important public relations lesson for Ian. G.S.O. too, had come to the conclusion that the "Star" writer was himself having a little personal problem with drinking. Bobbie told Ian<sup>24</sup> that she had sent the columnist a very nice letter thanking him for his interest in AA and that, inasmuch as all newspaper men like facts, he was being sent some AA literature so that he could be reliably informed about us. The columnist was also told a few things about AA aims and purposes together with information about what can be done for sick alcoholics who wish to recover. Bobbie doubted that he would write any more misrepresenting articles. She told Ian, "I think you were wise in not protesting too much to this newspaper. Our experience shows that if we try to fight papers we only create resentment. My letter to Mr. Mc gave him nothing about which he could argue."

Then came an event of considerable importance for AA in New Zealand — the first AA visitors from overseas. Bobbie wrote on 9 July 1947, to tell Ian that Lillian Roth, a famous night club singer, after years of alcoholic oblivion, was on the comeback trail after joining AA and would be performing on the Tivoli Theatre Circuit in Auckland within a month.<sup>25</sup> Lillian was travelling with Burt M. her husband, also an AA. Bobbie had sent Ian's address to Lillian and Burt and suggested that he write to them to arrange a meeting. Bobbie hoped Ian would be able to take advantage of the chance to meet "honest-to-goodness AA's face to face."<sup>26</sup> Later, Ian could not recall how he scraped the money together to get to Auckland, but he did, and found Burt "a very solid AA" who was "important to Lillian in maintaining her sobriety, which whilst enthusiastic, was quite shaky."<sup>27</sup> This was Ian's first meeting with a recovered alcoholic. In the months following his visit to Auckland and the time spent there with Lillian Roth and her husband, Ian stayed close to home, now at 'Balgowan', Spring Grove, Nelson, studying the Big Book, keeping sober and getting fit working on the farm.

The second person to gain sobriety in New Zealand through the AA programme was Alf J. in Auckland. When in Wellington talking with the

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distributors of the MARCH OF TIME film, Ian had also visited the Health Department telling them of his contact with AA. This encounter was shortly to bear fruit. The Health Department passed on to Ian a letter they had received from an Auckland doctor who had a relative in urgent need of treatment for alcoholism. The doctor had heard that someone in Wellington was in touch with a new approach and wrote for information. Immediately, Ian sent his only copy of the Big Book plus other literature. In order to focus his attention on 'the new treatment the doctor had demanded that Alf, his brother-in-law, return with him to his (the doctor's) house at Titirangi and, once there, literally threw the book on the table saying, "see what you can make of that." Years later Alf was to recall, "I read that alcoholism was a disease. I remember the tremendous sense of relief I felt that at last somebody knew what I had been fighting all my life. I read the book, and the obsession with bottles of alcohol was simply taken away from me. It's something I will never be able to understand or explain."<sup>28</sup> Several months later when Ian and Alf were to meet it was to discover that they had been in the same class at school.

Soon after his correspondence with the Auckland doctor, Ian had his first Twelfth Step call. He received a letter from Bill L. who wrote to say that he was in trouble through alcohol and had heard of the film, 'Problem Drinkers' and Ian's association with it. They met for the first time in the lounge of the Midland Hotel, Wellington. Ian thought that, as he had spent hundreds of hours and a lot of money drinking there, he had a right to use the facilities! The two found much in common and from this meeting, Bill L. found his sobriety.<sup>29</sup> Bill L. was a foundation member of the Wellington group and later moved on to Auckland where he operated the first alcoholic hostel, 'Maranga House' in Dominion Road.<sup>30</sup>

Another very early member was Arch F. in Dunedin. His widow recalls the events of 1947:

*"Ian had spoken about AA from the pulpit of Central Mission church here and Arch read the report of it in the daily paper. At that time, Arch's case was pretty desperate mentally, physically and financially, so he was naturally interested.*

*"He wrote to Ian and I remember Ian smiling at meetings where he quoted Arch's letter which stated that, although he (Arch) didn't consider his case hopeless, he felt the time was not far distant when it would be. Correspondence passed between Ian and Arch and I'll never forget that Sunday afternoon when, having decided to try the programme, Arch sat in our lounge for hours sweating it out, until, admitting his helplessness, he finally turned his life over to God.*

*"Arch didn't meet Ian until the following year so I consider he did very well to make such progress with only contacts by letter from Ian to help him.*

*"When Howard H. came in it was a wonderful thing for Arch to have a sharing partner and I guess Howard felt the same. Arch's next contact after Howard was Murdoch Y. whose wife approached us first on Murdoch's behalf and that was the beginning of many 'get-togethers' between Arch*

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and Murdoch and Ann and I. It was a tremendous relief for the early wives who had to bottle things up for so long to have someone to share their troubles and who . . . understood completely.

*"Arch was very enthusiastic about AA and he spared no time or effort if he could help another. We had many meetings of alkie and their wives at our home as did Howard and Ena, until it was decided to rent a room in the centre of the city."*<sup>31</sup>

In the letter from Arch's widow just quoted are some words which encapsulate AA " . . . having decided to try the programme, Arch sat in our lounge for hours sweating it out, until, admitting his helplessness, he finally turned his life over to God." To recover, the alcoholic needs to do three things: to have hit a personal rock bottom, to realise that he/she cannot get out of this situation alone and to acknowledge the need for outside help. In essence, to surrender. The alcoholic has to give up the illusion that he/she can handle alcohol. With surrender the fight is over. What happens then? Feelings of peace, harmony and acceptance replace the old feelings of guilt. We must not think of this giving up as a negative thing — rather, by accepting himself as he really is the alcoholic learns a new humility. We are talking about a radical movement — a deep change in thought patterns and behaviour, where the old illusory ideas of omnipotence give way to an acceptance of reality and a willingness to seek and accept help from the outside. At the same time that the alcoholic accepts his/her own limitations and takes those first tentative steps towards trust in others, the helping hand of AA is there with the promise of new and secure relationships. In Alf's case, he was ready for and experienced a truly spiritual awakening. This is not necessarily a universal or even a mandatory response; all that is required of the alcoholic is the acknowledgement of some Power greater than himself/herself out there. Even before sobriety is gained the alcoholic can see the evidence made manifest in the AA groups where the members have moved to new strengths and serenity through, and in spite of their own limitations.

The AA message is one of hope. Not a list of do's and don'ts which the alcoholic has heard for years from parents, employers, judges, policemen, doctors, priests, but another alkie saying 'this is what I did'. And he is invited to share in the process of recovery as of right. As Bill W. said in recalling his first meeting with Dr. Bob:

*"You see, our talk was a completely mutual thing. I had quit preaching. I knew that I needed this alcoholic as much as he needed me. This was it. And this mutual give-and-take is at the heart of all of AA's Twelfth Step work today. This was how to carry the message. The final missing link was located right there in my first talk with Dr. Bob."*<sup>32</sup>

Father L.M. McFerran, one of the three original non AA members of the General Service Conference sees<sup>33</sup> essential similarities between AA's beginnings in America and the start of the fellowship in this country. Not only is there a marked affinity between the drinking patterns of Bill W. and Ian McE. but the two men were both from commercial backgrounds — Bill was a Wall

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Street Analyst, Ian, a commerce graduate, began his working life in the family firm, and, in their mid careers both men gave up their previous activities to devote themselves full-time to AA. Father McFerran points up other remarkable similarities also between Dr. Bob, the American co founder and Alf J. in New Zealand. Like Dr. Bob, Alf came from a family active in church affairs; just as Dr. Bob sobered up when he first got married and established his practice, Alf too, had ten 'hellish sober years' in order to hold his family together and build up his practice. Father McFerran notes that Dr. Bob sought an answer to his problems through the Oxford Group, Alf read everything he could on the problem in his life. It was a Methodist minister friend and the local mayor of the suburb in which Alf lived who read the same Readers Digest article which led to Ian's letter to Bobby B. at the General Service Office in New York. There is another resemblance which Father McFerran notes; the fact that AA in New Zealand, as in America, is the story of two cities — Bill W. in New York, Dr. Bob in Akron, Ohio. Whilst Ian made his base in Wellington, Alf remained in Auckland putting down AA roots as did Dr. Bob in his home city.

These analogies are important but in this country we must add a third city to the equation — Dunedin. Both Auckland and Dunedin, from the beginning, built up strong consistent groups. Whilst many AA's can point to Ian as their sponsor, it is true that no group formed in Nelson until after he had left that city and Wellington, at least in the period up until 1951, never mustered either the numbers or the feeling of solidarity which characterised the groups which formed around Alf in Auckland and Arch in Dunedin. Ian was the public figure, the persuader, the educator, moving deliberately to reach those people most likely to come into contact with the alcoholic. Like Dr. Bob in Akron, Alf and Arch worked directly in their own communities with fellow sufferers.

Whilst a large part of this history covers the work which Ian performed, we must not forget the less spectacular but nonetheless essential activities centred on the AA groups where the strength of the fellowship resides.

**CHAPTER 3**

***1951 to 1956***

Establishment of groups in most parts of  
New Zealand

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The early members wasted no time in carrying the message; moving quickly from isolated individuals to prime movers in the formation of AA groups in their own communities. Alf J. in Auckland had a great number of calls for help immediately after he gained his own sobriety,<sup>1</sup> and the first AA group in New Zealand, which met in his home at Devonport,<sup>2</sup> was registered with GSO in New York in June 1948 with three members.<sup>3</sup> By January 1950 the group had grown to twelve.<sup>4</sup>

A year later there were six groups in the country — Auckland with 16 members; Hastings 3; Wellington 4; Nelson 3; Dunedin 15 and Invercargill 5.<sup>5</sup> A notable gap being Christchurch, which, after a promising start had folded.<sup>6</sup> This was the position of AA groups in New Zealand at the beginning of the decade.

Groups formed slowly in cities and towns the length of the country. Progress was slow but steady — in essence, one sober alcoholic talking to another still suffering the ravages of the disease. As the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous' says, "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much ensure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics."<sup>7</sup> The local group is the heart of the fellowship. In this period of development the Twelve Traditions which are the suggested guidelines for AA corporate life, were studied, discussed and put into action. We benefitted from the shared experience of the movement in other countries, particularly North America as the service centre there provided ample supplies of pamphlets and other literature. Whilst group life remains the most important aspect of AA, this chapter, relating the beginnings of AA in New Zealand as it relates to this essential aspect of the fellowship, is unbalanced in that we have not covered the history in an orderly fashion as it unfolded. This approach is deliberate. Some of the early activities of particular groups are covered in some detail; our purpose is to show, in microcosm, the way, repeated a thousand times, the philosophy of AA came to everyone who reached out to touch the fellowship. Time and time again the early members made their initial contact with the movement through an advertisement in the local newspaper or a listing in the telephone book.<sup>8</sup> As soon as a group, sometimes consisting of a few struggling members felt strong enough they moved out and made their presence known through the press. The implications are important. A publically expressed willingness to help presupposes an organised, albeit simple set-up to respond to desperate enquirers. It means a telephone must be manned, a letter to an anonymous box number demands a reply. It means being available day and night without fail.

With groups firmly established in Auckland and Dunedin, the chain began to get extra links. Ian noted in a letter to GSO, New York, on 23 July 1951 that "... two of the Dunedin members have been transferred to Timaru ...". One of these was Eric H. who, whilst in Dunedin, was 12th Stepped by Arch. Eric moved to Dunedin after a year's sobriety in the Dunedin group and became the founder of AA in Timaru. Because he travelled a good deal be-



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tween Christchurch and Dunedin he also helped Oamaru when a group started there.<sup>9</sup>

Another Dunedin member, Alan H. began the Invercargill group and GSO New York were advised of their formation early in 1951. As was common with most early groups, meetings were initially held in the homes of members.<sup>10</sup>

Ian had been to Palmerston North prior to 1952, fulfilling a speaking engagement at either Rotary or the Business Men's Lunch Club. There was no response from potential members and it was not until 1952 that Don Mc. heard a talk over the National Radio by Dr. Sylvester M., a Sydney psychiatrist, who was visiting this country at the invitation of New Zealand groups, that the seed was sown. Don recalls:

*"How to find AA was my problem . . . Needless to say, as a drinking alcoholic I didn't try too hard mainly because I wasn't ready."*

*"A few weeks later, a copy of the 'Evening Post, was thrown onto my front verandah. I make the guess, but I think I am right, that a dear old lady living next door placed the paper. In the personal column was a notice marked with a small cross. The item said to the effect, 'If you have a drinking problem Alcoholics Anonymous can help you. Write to Post Office Box, Wellington.' This I did a few days later when I put down my empty glass on the 16th September. It was three weeks before I had a reply. AA in Wellington could have been going through a shaky stage. I did hear that the alcoholic who had the key of the box had a slip and wouldn't hand the key over."*

*"I eventually received a letter from Ian my sponsor who made me welcome to AA. Soon after that Ian came up to Palmerston North. He killed many birds with one stone as not only did he pay me a visit, but that evening he was to address a conference of doctors at Palmerston North Hospital on Alcoholics Anonymous. I thought that was really something. Here was an ex-drunk speaking to a great number of doctors on a disease, which, at the time, they knew little about."*

*"AA in New Zealand at that time was a very close fellowship in . . . that if a new member came to light in say, Palmerston North, AA members all over New Zealand knew about it and wished him well. One got to know most of them by name and more closely, by correspondence. One also could be very concerned if one heard of a member say, in Hamilton, having a slip, so closely knit were the few groups." --*

"Traditionally", says the World Directory, "any two or more alcoholics meeting together for purposes of sobriety may consider themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they are self-supporting and have no outside affiliation." The following experiences, described by Don McL of Palmerston North, illustrate the way in which a group formed itself and grew in those early days.

After being sponsored by Ian McE. Don was later joined by Doug McL, and, together, they formed the Palmerston North group of two members early in 1953. Don said, "We, like other groups, have proved that AA will only pro-

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gress slowly. It was a long time before our third member, Jack, joined us and it took a number of years before the membership grew to fifteen solids." Don made his offices available in Rangitikei Street for meetings and later arranged for the group to rent a room in the same building. Don recalled:

*"As our group grew, so did our enthusiasm, so much so that we would visit other groups in Wellington, and Hutt Valley, Napier, Wanganui and Masterton. We learned something we never forgot through a visit we made to Petone group. It was one wet Saturday night when a car load of us set off. The further we went the worse the weather became and we all questioned whether we should go on or return to Palmerston North. We decided to go on and when we reached Petone, a power failure had occurred all over the area. We thought we had come all the way down for nothing. However, on going round to the back of the hall we noticed a chink of candle light under the door. The door was opened by Tom. He and Bill were there. We told them how pleased we were to see them on such a terrible night. They said that the light will always be on at the Petone group. Tom and Bill also illustrated that it takes only two to make a group."*

Don kept his sobriety by hospital visits made possible by Ian's initial contact and introduction, he was able to visit any alcoholic patient at any time; the group advertised meeting times; made itself known to all professional people and welfare agencies; enjoyed visits from travelling AA's and were enthusiastic in keeping close contact with other groups.

When the draft of this study was circulating for comments, someone out there said, "Hey! What about the women?" The reminder is timely. For reasons which we cannot explore in detail, women alcoholics differ in a number of ways from their male counterparts.<sup>12</sup> In the beginning, AA itself did not think that it could sober up women.<sup>13</sup> This attitude changed just as AA itself changed when its appeal to wider community groups became obvious. In the early years, those who achieved sobriety were, almost without exception, considered to be hopeless cases. Gradually, the membership became younger; the fellowship drew in those who still retained health, home, social status.

Part of this change was reflected in the growing success with women alcoholics. There remained the stigma on alcoholism, a burden twice as heavy on women as men.<sup>14</sup> Women had to overcome a double standard even more rigid in the 1940's and 1950's than it is today. Around 1939-1940 when the first women began to attend the AA meetings in Akron, Ohio, they were helped by the wives of the male members of AA — a practice which continued for some years, there being so few women AA's to help the new women members.<sup>15</sup>

Small wonder then that Lil T., one of the first women AA's in New Zealand, had a hard and lonely time. Lil had been in touch with Ian and, with one other woman, attended the small group in Auckland with Alf J. The time — May, 1949. There were about three other members and she felt that

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"although of course, I wouldn't dare suggest it to them, the poor men are somewhat at a loss as to how to cope with we women."<sup>16</sup>

Lil was reading the Big Book given to her by the doctor to whom she had gone for help and she must have been directed to this particular physician by Ian as the doctor knew about AA and had a relative in the fellowship. We can be certain that he was Alf J's brother-in-law.

Also at Ian's suggestion, after about five month's sobriety, Lil wrote to Bobbie B. in New York, ostensibly for information of particular help to a woman AA, but more importantly, to put her in touch with other women AA's. The GSO office at that time had three female secretaries, all members, and they quickly identified with Lil's needs even offering all the help they could in setting up her own group, at the same time pointing out that in New York women were no longer an oddity and that all meetings were about 50-50.<sup>17</sup>

Regretfully, Bobbie B. after seven years of complete devotion to GSO had had a serious breakdown necessitating retirement from all office activities. It is appropriate, whilst we are talking of women in AA to pause and remember the contribution Bobbie B. made to AA in New Zealand. We are not the only country to have benefitted. In Australia, Dr. Sylvester M. wrote to her in New York in 1942 after reading an article about AA in the 'American Journal of Psychiatry.'

Writing in the Australian AA magazine 'The Reviver' in 1953 Dr. Sylvester said of Bobbie — "She has written to us since — and it is my opinion that the whole credit of starting AA in Australia is due solely to her advice and words of wisdom over the years.

"We wrote to her repeatedly about our difficulties. Once, when in despair of ever getting AA on its feet in Sydney, she wrote and told us that they had had exactly the same experiences as ourselves in America."

Another early woman member, Norah B. joined the fellowship in March, 1952 just as the Christchurch group was getting started with meetings in Fred C.'s house, Hagley Avenue. Norah answered an advertisement in the local paper inserted by the members and was visited by Bill L. who, whilst in Wellington, was Ian's first successful 12th Step call.

Of the original Christchurch members — Fred C., Cyril E., Jack P., Bob F., Tom D. — three, Norah, Ruth W., and Phil were women. Hardly the 50-50 of New York, but a start.

Around September 1952 Christchurch members travelled to Timaru where Eric H. was still battling on as a loner and were joined for a weekend of AA by the Dunedin group. Thus the chain began to get extra links and those already in place were made stronger.

All this time, GSO in New York helped individual members with the same readiness they extended to struggling groups seeking guidance. From New York, Norah was given the names of experienced AA's in other countries to write to and she found the contacts helpful.

Norah recalled recently, "I used all the help I could get, I was going to do everything I had to to keep sober. It was not easy in those early days, people

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for the most part were so inexperienced it was necessary to seek all the help we could get from overseas."<sup>18</sup>

Norah moved to Wellington in 1953 where she met Margaret and the two women were soon joined by Sue. Meetings were held in the National Party rooms and the women "seemed to be the only ones free (and sober) enough to answer the calls which were coming from enquirers" as Norah recalled.

She has fond memories of Ian McE. She first met Ian in Christchurch when she had been sober six months — Ian 6½ years. Norah laughed, "he came to a meeting, we listened to what he told us. We were so impressed that we thanked him, said goodnight and left him to clean up and lock the hall. A nice way to treat a guest speaker!"

Norah also remembered that "if a meeting was getting too grim, Ian would 'pray for a clown'. The best advice Ian gave me was to 'act like a drunk whilst sober,' in other words, to have fun."

In the 1960's Norah felt the need for a women's group in Wellington and wrote to New York for advice. She remembers some of the opposition "... soon we were established, not without a few howls of horror from some of the men. I always told them that if they were having difficulty with the programme, the Women's Group would be happy to help them. That seemed to settle any argument. We were indeed fortunate, the women who came to the group remained loyal and sober; to this day the few who are still alive keep in touch."

Norah felt the need for this group because of community attitudes toward women alcoholics who "were considered a disgrace indeed ... it was sad because I saw so many women die because their families did not want the shame of AA which they refused to believe in."<sup>18</sup>

From the earliest days 'special purpose groups' have been accepted in every country where AA is found. Some members have found their special needs best met by associating with others of similar background and interests — gays, women, blacks etc. A recent issue of 'Mainstay'<sup>19</sup> sets out the guidelines and conditions AA suggests as appropriate for such meetings. 'Guidelines' Volume 26, No. 4, August-September 1981, and issued by GSO New York, quotes a statement in 1977 by Dr. John L. Norris, then Chairperson of the General Service Board:

*"In general, we have inclined to this view: When other requirements are added that might seem to exclude some alcoholics, these should be considered AA meetings, and **not** AA groups. We have never discouraged AA's from forming special-purpose meetings of any or all kinds to meet the needs of interested individuals, but we have been hesitant to consider as **groups**, those that might seem to exclude any alcoholic, for whatever reasons.*

*"Many members feel that no AA group is special, and therefore that no group should be labelled as such, or even give the impression that it is 'special'. However, the fact is that such groups **do** exist ... These groups feel that the 'labels' serve the purpose of attraction (double identification) and are not intended to imply exclusion of other alcoholics."*

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*'Guidelines' adds to this statement:*

*"In reality, where special groups are formed to meet the needs of a certain group within AA, they are generally not exclusive. They are open to any AA who wishes to attend; their **purpose** is sobriety. (One man, who got sober at the age of 70, attended his first meeting at a young people's group and identified!)"*

*Finally, and also from this issue of 'Guidelines':*

*"Members of special-purpose groups are certain that many of their kind would never be able to get themselves to AA if they had to enter through a regular group.*

*"Whether or not we agree with all this thinking, the point is that many alcoholics do agree with it. And they believe in it seriously enough to form these special groups and make them work."*

Years before these guidelines were set down, the Women's meeting in Wellington and other similar groups since, have not sought to exclude any AA whose sobriety would be enhanced by attending.

Auckland have had their own Newsletter 'Unity' originally known as 'The Bulletin' since 1960. In the January, February and May issues of 1980 considerable research produced very detailed chronicles of groups in most part of New Zealand, with particular emphasis on those in the Auckland region. These articles, contributed by a variety of members, are a significant record for those who would like to read an affectionate tribute to the old-timers who had so much to do with the start of AA in the North and who later played a positive role in the unfolding of wider services.

To Rodney G. must go the credit for starting the first outside AA meeting held in Labour Party Hall in Devonport — the year 1947<sup>20</sup> Rodney, sponsored by Alf J. had a travelling position and, like Justin W. a little later, carried the tidings of AA up and down the country.

When we reflect that some of the Auckland members are still active in the life of their meetings after 25 to 35 years of sobriety, we need to look more closely to account for this cohesion. The answer lies in what Ernest Kurtz calls "The unique AA phenomenon of 'sponsorship'."<sup>21</sup> Some organisations require a prospective member to be introduced by a sponsor; anyone who has a desire to stop drinking can be a member of AA. No intermediary is needed. AA assigns a much deeper meaning to the process whereby an experienced member of the group, compatible with the newcomer, in an equal relationship, provides close contact and support for as long as required. Needless to say, the sponsor is pleased when the new member widens his/her contacts with the group and hopefully, can act as a sponsor to others in turn. Most AA's have a special link with their sponsor — a relationship which continues for years in one form or another.

Frequently, the health of a group is signalled by the quality of sponsorship within it and this seems to have been the strength of Auckland in those early

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days. Not surprising therefore, is the sponsorship of the first prison group at Mount Eden late in 1955 when Scotty K., Doug D. and Stan B. started the meeting in that institution.<sup>22</sup>

The act of sponsorship is something which can only be fostered, not forced. In more recent times concern has been expressed about a decline in this crucial process:

*"...in the early days when there were no hospitals and AA's were small in numbers... sponsorship had been superb. Now we have seen the situation occur where the norm has become recovery in hospitals, and the abnormal is recovery outside in AA. The result is that the urgency of sponsorship... has been removed... very few people who are now active in AA have experienced the supportive effect of a sponsor, so that their personal experience doesn't lead them to give what they haven't experienced themselves..."<sup>23</sup>*

In addressing the many issues which face an AA group such as sponsorship, the right use of money, the application of the Twelve Steps and so on, constant reference is made to the 'group conscience.' With the Twelve Traditions as the touchstone, against which every decision is measured, the group can search in unity and form a common base for the right answer, secure in the knowledge that, collectively, a more innovative, original and creative response is possible than would be the case if each member were to act alone.

Frequently, one hears the words — 'there are no musts in AA'. This is true. Without a significant amount of individual freedom the fellowship would have become rigid and formal, repelling those most in need of help. Without some authority over the members the movement could descend into anarchy. Therefore the members acknowledge the ultimate authority of the 'group conscience' which their own participation has a part in forming.

## **CHAPTER 4**

***1957 — 1960***

### **The Groups Coming Together**

## *The Groups Come Together*

By the early 1950's membership, whilst scattered, was growing. There were twenty-six members all told in August 1949 — including a group in Auckland with ten members and the same number in Dunedin with a lone member in Christchurch.<sup>1</sup> There was no group in Wellington.<sup>2</sup>

In September 1949 Ian, with the consent of the groups, became the General Service Centre for New Zealand and the placing of all orders for books, literature and 'Grapevine' subscriptions were to be handled through him.<sup>3</sup> This arrangement was confirmed by GSO, New York the same month.<sup>4</sup>

By October 1950 the membership of AA in New Zealand had reached fifty-five,<sup>5</sup> and Ian felt the need to give the fellowship 'some stability and unification.' He proposed an Alcoholic Foundation for New Zealand and wrote to the AA Foundation in New York setting out his ideas. It was a very grand letter, not in tune with the usual chatty letters he had been in the habit of sending. Ian the ex businessman had taken over from Ian, the ex drunk! He told of his work over the previous three years during which he had spent six months of each year moving round the country in a public relations capacity, speaking to various groups — Rotary (as employers) the British Medical Association, medical students and the press. Ian saw the proposed Foundation as having three AA members geographically spread, plus four non AA's.

Ian was at the end of his financial resources and had to make some decisions about his own future. He sought guidance from GSO and felt that the Foundation concept would provide input both in money and ideas to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

On 15 November 1950 Bill W. the co-founder of AA replied. His letter was very important at that time and is quoted in full:

November 15, 1950

Dear Ian M.

*Pardon my delay in answering your letter of October 24th. Because of my personal experience in exactly the same situation as yours, I have been asked to write you.*

*First of all, our congratulations on your progress. Compared with our early days here in the United States, you seem to have gone far indeed.*

*Please know that I feel entirely in sympathy with your objectives and pretty generally agree with your outlined means of reaching these.*

*A few general observations based on our experience here might be helpful. Might I suggest that you proceed at first on a rather informal basis? After careful consultation with leading outlying members, could you not form something which might be called "The AA Foundation Committee of New Zealand" drawing into its membership the people you now have in mind. This could be done on an experimental, tentative basis. Though our early Committee here bore the resounding title "The Alcoholic Foundation", it actually never came to be incorporated for many years. This has advantages, it leaves you fluid, elastic. If mistakes are made, you are not in a legal mess with vested titles, interests, and so forth. Later, when you*



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have proved the workability of the set-up, incorporation is desirable and very necessary. But I wouldn't hurry that. Put the business on a trial and error basis at first. Or, at the most, what a solicitor would call an Agreement of Trusts. Be sure, too, that you have the full consent and understanding of 90% of the present membership. Otherwise hard opposition will compromise and probably defeat your purpose.

Now about the money aspect. In the early days here, we had a little outside help. The fact that it was very little probably saved the AA movement from professionalism, even disaster. In fact, we had so little money that we alcoholics raised funds among ourselves to publish the book. My personal income for a period of seven years from our general fund averaged about \$1700.00 a year. It was awfully rough going but I am now satisfied our poverty saved us. Had Mr. John D. Rockefeller, who was deeply interested, been unwise enough to endow us handsomely, or had we have heavy government support, I think it would have ruined us.

Therefore, I suggest you go very slowly in taking large grants, no matter how attractive they look. If you receive an income yourself from outside donations, be sure to make it clear you are paid for special services, not for 12 Step work. If you ever begin to look like a paid therapist or missionary, you will be done for. Incidentally, my own support for full time AA work today derives from a royalty on the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous". This I earn as an author but not as a missionary. The arrangement leaves me strictly amateur.

Neither do I know much about governmental attitudes in New Zealand. In some other parts of the world, Finland being the troublesome example just now, government money brings headaches. The minute they put in money, their social workers want to run the AA. You know alcoholics well enough already to realise that won't work. Even modest funds from such a source must be had free of commitment.

I believe that Australia has had some experience with Foundations. While I may be badly informed, I do carry the impression they were a bit premature. They got too well and too firmly organised too quickly. In general, the more informal and simple, the better. In this connection, you could consider the ultimate size of AA in New Zealand.

In conclusion, the AA Tradition really gives you carte blanche to do as you like — you can even disagree with the AA Tradition itself. Yet, I urge you, go cautiously about large money commitments or organisation. Take no step at this stage which cannot easily be retraced. And, regard any outside funds as temporary help. Always keep in mind the desirable, ultimately necessary goal of self-support. You shouldn't get married to the government or to anybody.

Devotedly yours,  
William G. W.

WCW/hgb

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Ian's concept of the kind of service structure for New Zealand at that time was premature.<sup>6</sup> The pattern of growth in this country led to quite a different set-up, one which was to be on a much more local and group level. It has proved, in the long term, to be more solidly based than a rather grandiose 'Foundation' imposed on a small and fragile membership.

Ian felt surprise that there were not more among the recovered alcoholics who were willing to give the time and effort to the sort of public relations work he was doing alone. These AA's would do anything in response to a Twelfth Step call but did not break out new ground.<sup>7</sup> He felt great concern that he was possibly making a job for himself but felt also that the new groups being formed and the increased community awareness being fostered by his work was not something he could neglect.

Bill W. expressed misgivings over the receipt of grants from outside agencies and from Government. He knew that Ian had received \$250.00 from the Health Department in 1949 and it was anticipated that this would be the first instalment of a regular grant which could increase in value each year.

Ian was now in a very similar position to that which had been reached by the co-founders of AA — Bill W. and Dr. Bob when the fellowship was young. Bill could not continue his work full-time and Dr. Bob was unable to put in more than half his time without a regular income for both of them.<sup>8</sup>

The Twelve Traditions of AA were being written at this time. They had already been refined from the original 'long form' of 1946 to parallel the format and style of the Twelve Steps. The First International Convention of AA met in Cleveland, Ohio, in the northern summer of 1950 — a few months before Bill's letter to Ian. At this Convention the Twelve Traditions were approved and adopted by the whole movement. They became the Second Legacy of AA; the Steps being the First.

"The Twelve Traditions are to group survival and harmony what AA's Twelve Steps are to each members sobriety and peace of mind."<sup>9</sup>

Much earlier, before the Traditions had been set down as suggested guidelines for group conduct, it had been clearly understood that, under no circumstances, could money be paid to a member of AA for doing Twelfth Step work.

Bill W. had the royalties from the book, 'Alcoholics Anonymous' to provide a minimal income. Ian had no such resource. Over the three previous years, 1947 to 1950, he had contributed about \$2,000.00 of his own money to AA. There was no difficulty in the use of his time in spreading the word about the fellowship, but he was unable to continue moving around the country unless his expenses were met from some source.

Ian felt that new members, new contacts and greater community awareness followed his visits and that he was the one making the biggest contribution to this work.<sup>10</sup> One reason for setting up the proposed Foundation was to have a group to whom these problems could be referred and who would also act as a source of finance. In a further letter to Ian dated 21 December 1950 Bill W.

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had this to say, "Concerning your problems of becoming a fulltime worker, I think there is little I can add. You need only consult the situation, as you see it, the AA Tradition, and your conscience. This well done, the right answer will surely follow. If, by chance, the answer is wrong, then you will have learned by experience, which is quite usual for me."

Soon after this exchange of letters with Bill W. a row blew up over money, authority, public relations, and leadership. Some comment on these issues is important. At the outset, AA in the United States faced these problems — how much money did the fellowship really need? Who had authority to make decisions? What sort of organisational structure should be set up? Put simply, AA decided that the primary purpose of the fellowship was to reach the still-suffering alcoholic. To do this job properly minimal organisational structure was needed and therefore, a minimal amount of money. "It is in this sense that AA has declared for the principle of corporate poverty."<sup>11</sup> The concept, set out in Tradition Seven reads, "Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

The emphasis on self reliance comes through most clearly when discussing legacies. When AA was very young and the New York office were facing one of their regular financial crises, word came that an AA member intended leaving the fellowship a legacy of \$10,000.00. After intense debate the gift was declined. AA must remain forever poor — only receiving from members enough money to pay for essential services with a little in reserve — no more and no less. Up until 1969, following the lead of New York, bequests were declined in this country, but, with a change in North American policy, these are now acceptable from AA's only in the year of the member's death with an upper limit of \$300.00 in each instance. Thus, the temptation to accept large sums of money with consequent problems is avoided.

These early members had been studying not only the Big Book but also the Secretary's Handbook and the December 1950 'Grapevine' with the article 'Your Third Legacy' written by Bill W. and Dr. Bob giving them a much clearer picture of the way AA worked. Ian wanted no monopoly on knowledge about gaining sobriety through AA — the only way for the fellowship to grow was for members to share their experience with others. New members however, were keen to learn not only how group life could be fostered, but also to understand something of the relationship between groups. When Ian became 'The General Service Centre' for New Zealand in September 1950, 'with the consent of the groups,' it is not clear just how many groups were in agreement. The suspicion lingers that Ian may have pushed agreement, so deep was his concern to foster the fellowship. The 1950 'Grapevine' article became a talking point and focussed the disquiet of some who felt that Ian was assuming too much of a leadership role. Ian had always felt "very deeply the need to carry the news of AA to any other place in New Zealand where alcoholics are in need of it. Right from the beginning it has not been my policy

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to seek for alcoholics but to tell the story to those most likely to come into contact with them."<sup>12</sup>

Ian had also made it clear that he did not go, without invitation, to any city where a group was already established. Six AA's spent time at Ian's farm over Christmas, 1950, and informal discussions with them on the question of money 'took a sharp unpleasant turn.'<sup>13</sup> There were accusations that Ian had 'professionalised' AA and one group in particular was strong in its criticism. A meeting convened by Bill L. for January 1951 fell through and was reconvened for 20 March at Lower Hutt. The intention of the meeting being to set up a representative committee for AA in New Zealand so that the fellowship as a whole could take responsibility for the various services as suggested in the 'Grapevine' article. There was a flurry of letters and after the dust had settled a number of misunderstandings were cleared up.

The suggestion that all members in New Zealand be considered as one group was not feasible and the idea was abandoned. Ian, in turn, acknowledged that he held no position of authority in AA in New Zealand. A committee was formed in Wellington to meet from time to time as required to decide matters relating to the general affairs of AA in this country. Box 202, Te Aro, was adopted as the national address and Barney F. became the first secretary. Ian was elected a member of the committee and four others were to be appointed by the districts.<sup>14</sup> In an earlier letter to Bill W. Ian acknowledged that, "Perhaps I have been in error in not having some sort of informal committee earlier."<sup>15</sup>

Painful though the encounter may have been, the early members were right in challenging the acceptance of outside money by the fellowship. In addition to the Health Department grants, Ian was arranging for one or two friends to pay for his trip to Christchurch and this was one of the issues discussed in the light of the Seventh Tradition.

Over the next seven to eight years, the fellowship grew in strength with groups forming in most cities and towns. However, it was not until 1958 that provincial intergroup service committees were set up, and another eight years before AA in New Zealand formed its national body — The New Zealand General Service Conference. Whilst the 1950 proposals for a Foundation were premature, they forced the young fellowship to look at a number of issues and to see them in the light of both the Traditions and their own understanding and experience.

Tradition Nine states: "AA, as such, ought never to be organised, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve." In a letter to Ian dated 25 July 1955, Bill W. the co-founder of AA said:

*"There is a lot of confusion about this business of organisation in AA. Nobody is more for keeping it simple than I am. The old long form of the Traditions said 'That AA should have the least possible organisation'. But in the new form, you will note that we say 'AA should forever remain unorganised.' But, that we may organise services. This means that AA as a*

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*whole shall not have any government or organisation as such. But we do have to organise the services, and particularly at the top level, we have to organise them well so that AA can function. If we don't do this, AA will not remain simple, it will get very complicated. So, in actuality, organisation of the services is a step in the direction of simplicity and away from chaos. Lots of folks haven't got this distinction clear in their minds as yet. But that will come."*

No one in AA has the power to direct or govern another. The only discipline is self imposed — for the individual, the Twelve Steps as a suggested path to recovery; for the groups and AA as a whole, the Twelve Traditions. Again, these are the distillation of hard won experience and as Bill W. said in an earlier letter to Ian "... the AA Tradition really gives you carte blanche to do as you like — you can even disagree with the AA Tradition itself." But we know that unless the Traditions are applied AA will decline and disappear just as surely the AA member jeopardises his/her own sobriety by not trying to work the Steps.

By the middle of the fifties, groups were established the length of the country. 'Mainstay' printed a map of New Zealand in the November 1955 issue<sup>16</sup> showing twenty-two groups but, by March the following year, a similar map showed the revised position with over forty-four groups.<sup>17</sup> Later the same year<sup>18</sup> 'Mainstay' reported that the 1956 Handbook and World Directory listed New Zealand membership at 440.

Tradition Eleven says, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films." Just as the individual alcoholic consolidates his/her own continued sobriety by working with others, so too, does the AA group ensure its own continuity and well-being by fulfilling a public relations role. That is, by making the AA way of life known to the still-suffering alcoholic.

From the very early days of AA in New Zealand, groups, once established, have held 'open' meetings. These are regular occasions, as often as one meeting a week, when family members, friends and others interested and concerned about alcoholism, are able to attend an AA meeting.

Palmerston North group, late in 1954, celebrated their second birthday with an open meeting at which there were fifty present. Among outside speakers was the Superintendent of the Public Hospital. Seventeen Wellington members made the trip and another ten came from up to 100 miles away. Wally McT. an American engineer with the paper mill project was a speaker on this occasion.<sup>19</sup>

Public meetings provide another forum. Ian McE. recalled, in his talk to the Anniversary Dinner, the first such meeting held in Wellington. It was in 1958. The original booking was for the Town Hall, but wiser counsel prevailed and the venue was shifted to the Concert Chamber. This was the ad that appeared in the "Dominion" of 28 June 1958: "Alcoholics Anonymous Tells its Story to

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the Public. Films and Speakers. Concert Chamber, Town Hall, Wellington. 8p.m., Wednesday, 2 July 1958" (Inserted by AA Inter Group Service Committee). As it was, over 400 attended with Dr. Mirams in the chair. Ian recalled,

*"We had, I think, only six members at that time and only four of them were dry . . .*

*"After the meeting, I think it was the Public Relations Officer of the Railways, came up to me and said how much he had enjoyed the meeting. He said, 'You know I have never heard six men present such a balanced case.' Well, you can imagine how balanced it was, trying to get four shaky AA's to speak at all, but they all did, God Bless them, . . . and from that AA spread out to the Hutt and soon they had a group out there . . ."*<sup>20</sup>

AA groups have always sought the co-operation and friendship of people in their own communities, bearing in mind, that 'we are limited to sharing our own firsthand knowledge' of the suffering of an alcoholic, and of recovery. Tia T. talking of the early days in Rotorua, tells of the help the group received from the Mayor, who always chaired the public meetings, the Probation Officer, who, at one period lent his office for meetings, the local Doctor, always ready to provide medical care, and the Salvation Army officers and Catholic priests always helpful and frequent attenders at meetings. Without exception, AA groups all over New Zealand can report similar experiences in community co-operation.

## **Intergroup**

Characteristically, the formal service structure in New Zealand had a modest start. At a February 1958 AA meeting in the library of St Mary's Church, a number of members suggested that a combined Intergroup should be formed in the Wellington Province to service activities in that area.

Wes M. of Eastern Suburbs Group was deputised to write to all groups. On 18 February an invitation was extended to a meeting for 1 March in the Boardroom of the Show Buildings, Wellington to explore the proposal. Twenty-eight representatives attended, and, with Ian in the Chair and Wes as temporary secretary, it was agreed to form an 'AA Intergroup Service Committee.'

Groups were requested to endorse the proposal, forward the names of their representatives and to make provision for financial support. Events moved quickly. The next meeting was set down for 15 March at the same venue.

At each meeting, some aspect of the Traditions was discussed. At this first meeting Dick Carron's tape on 'General Services of AA' was played and later, Bill W.'s article 'Respecting Money' from the November 1957 issue of 'AA Grapevine' was read and included in the minutes for the benefit of those not present. The 15 March meeting was the first time in New Zealand that AA groups had joined to pool some of their resources.

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As Bill's article said:

*"... Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility — one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our groups passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and AA as a whole, will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid.*

*"When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for our blessings and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer.*

This practice of listening, reading and reflecting on the Traditions continued as an integral part of the Intergroup meetings which not only gave the delegates a rationale for their activities, but also through them, the AA members back in the groups gained in knowledge and understanding.

In addition to Wellington groups, representatives came from Hastings, Palmerston North, Pahiatua, Upper Hutt, Petone and Masterton. A fund was set up to purchase literature and Ian was authorised to obtain an import licence for 200.00 pounds for the coming year. Planning began for a Public Meeting to be held in the Concert Chamber of the Town Hall.

Whilst we have said that the Intergroup Service Committee represented the first occasion on which groups had combined resources and worked together, we mean that this was done on a formal continuing basis to further those objects designed to provide a service to AA as a whole. The editors of 'Mainstay' from the inception of the magazine, were enthusiastic in fostering the spirit of fellowship. The very first issue asked the question, "Why shouldn't we organise an annual convention, if not for the whole of New Zealand, then at least say, Northern and Southern Conventions?"<sup>22</sup> There was a South Island Convention at Timaru on 5 May 1956<sup>23</sup> and 'Mainstay' continued to report open AA meetings in all parts of the country: North Shore group with a write up in the 'North Shore Times' of 24 August 1955 with 100 present; Hamilton group met on 28 August an attendance of 90; there were 150 at Palmerston North's open meeting on 9 October, and, early in 1956, open meetings were recorded at Oamaru, Balclutha and Alexandra. In August 1956<sup>24</sup> a letter to the editor made the case for a New Zealand Conference to help with the liaison with General Service Office in New York and to take advantage of cheaper printing rates for literature through bulk orders.

In the Spring of 1956<sup>25</sup> the editors reported that, in response to a questionnaire they had sent out, "a consensus indicated a desire for an AA Convention. Easter seems to meet with approval and 'Mainstay' will start things moving and advise after consultation with South Island committee and perhaps Sue and Stuart in Wellington." A month later the response from Wellington<sup>26</sup> indicated that Easter was a bit too close so they had suggested Queen's Birthday weekend, 1 to 3 June. An enrolment form was enclosed.

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The 'Mainstay' editors were enthusiastic about fostering a Conference which was seen as an opportunity for AA's from many places to come together and 'share their experience strength and hope with each other' in the context of what was to be an extended AA meeting. It was not seen as a place where AA business would be conducted.

Thus began a long and close association with 'Arahina'. The first Conference was held in June 1958<sup>27</sup> followed by another in October the following year.<sup>28</sup> Writing in 'Mainstay'<sup>29</sup> many years later Ian recalled the place as having:

*"Very close and dear memories for some of the older AA's. 'Arahina' is the name of a fine old brick family home at Marton on the main trunk line. It was owned by the Girl Guides Association and used by them in school holidays as a training centre.*

*"To meet rising costs they offered it for Conventions to any organisations with such a need. The main house could sleep 20 to 30 in a number of rooms with some verandah space.*

*"We made our own beds, cleared the tables after meals and washed up . . . There were large fireplaces in all public rooms and plenty of cut firewood. We had to start the fire in the morning and just stoke it up all day. There was a Conference Hall in the grounds which was later used for the Saturday afternoon meeting and the public or open meeting on Saturday night."*

Such was the charm of the place that the Intergroup Service Committee, later to become the Central Area Assembly of AA decided to meet there annually; as well as periodically in other places. It was at 'Arahina' too, that the General Service Conference of AA came into being in August 1964 after the first New Zealand Convention at Massey University in Palmerston North, 16 February 1964, had approved its formation.

Just as the early meetings at 'Arahina' were intended to foster unity through fellowship, the Intergroup Committee meetings pursued the same objective through service. It will be simpler to look at the achievements of Intergroup under the headings of the various activities through which the groups found that a pooling of resources enabled them to better fulfil the concept of service.

Firstly, the very existence of this alliance gave AA a public face and, in matters affecting AA as a whole, it became possible to speak with one voice. Whilst this, the first Intergroup in New Zealand, was limited geographically to the Wellington Province, it set the pattern on which later coalitions were to model themselves. Furthermore, its central position made it possible for representatives from further afield to attend, firstly on an *ad hoc* basis and later by design. From these enlarged meetings came the initiative for the setting up a General Service Conference in 1964.

Intergroup became an important training ground, both for individuals to assume responsibilities beyond caring for their own sobriety, and for groups to learn to work together. Decisions were nearly always made by consensus and, where a vote indicated evenly divided opinion, the matter was frequent-



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ly laid to one side until the way ahead could be seen more clearly. Power within AA is diffused by a system of rotating committees with very limited authority — the concept of service as opposed to government. An added advantage being that a greater number of members have the opportunity to serve.

From the outset, the venue for Intergroup meetings was not confined to Wellington. Whilst the first two were held in that city — 15 March 1958 and 12 April, the third was in Palmerston North, the fourth in Wanganui, the sixth in Napier. A pattern was established which continues to this day.

We have seen how the individual groups carried the message by holding public meetings. Particularly when the Intergroup met outside Wellington there was a public meeting in the evening following the completing of AA business in the afternoon. In Wanganui on 7 June 1958, talks were given to prison inmates as well as the usual public meeting; in Napier, the sixth meeting, the Mayor, Peter Tait, chaired the evening meeting. In this way, the local group was supported and the community awareness of AA increased. Let us now look in more detail at the ways in which Intergroup grew and developed over the eight or so years from 1958 to 1964.

Perhaps nothing so well illustrates the importance of Intergroup as the work of supplying literature. In the north, Alf J. imported 150 Big Books<sup>30</sup> augmenting Ian's and Gilbert Landsdown's efforts.

The first attempt at a New Zealand pamphlet was a reprint of 'AA' in which Ian proposed to add his own story and that of Bill O'N. who was the AA secretary in Sydney.<sup>31</sup> There was a word of caution from New York as generally permission to reprint is given provided there are no additions or deletions.<sup>32</sup> It is not known whether anything came of this venture.

Booksellers had fewer problems over currency and import licences than individuals. One device was to encourage the local bookseller to stock the Big Book and then to rush in and buy them all.<sup>33</sup> New Zealand was not the only country with post-war exchange problems. Bobbie B. wrote to Ian on 4 June 1948: "We well recognise the situation about books. We've had long correspondence with the Australian AA's, and after exploring it thoroughly here, we found out that over there the Government could grant permission to allow entry of our books into Australia if they wished. I believe that is now in the hands of Clive B., the secretary of the Central Office in Sydney." Bobbie went on, "Why don't you write and find out what is going on in this matter. Our book is copyrighted and we thought of having it printed abroad for distribution in other countries, but the Trustees feel that this would not be wise for many reasons. We are willing to do anything we can to help get our books to the alcoholics in other countries where Government restrictions now prohibit the sending out of payment for goods purchased in the United States." One suggestion was that "funds be deposited in a Bank in your country and held there until such time as the restrictions ended and they could be released." Bobbie continued, "In the meantime, I'm going to send you two books 'on the cuff' as we say in America. It simply means we will send you the books

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and not bill them but hold them in our account for some future time when perhaps the Government restrictions will be dissolved. They will go out with a label saying the package is an 'Unsolicited Gift.' We have been doing this for Ireland and England and the members there have been getting payment to us from time to time through travellers or through personal accounts held in this country. It's all very roundabout and we make no stipulation as to time."

The surge of demand for Big Books and other literature raised problems for New York and they were forced to look at the whole way of operating. There were requests coming from Australia, New Zealand and England and all these countries shared exchange control problems.<sup>34</sup>

The desperate need for books had to be balanced against the capacity of New York to extend credit until such time as the exchange position improved. At this time GSO were operating on a deficit. "It is sad but true, that our groups do not contribute as they should to the maintenance of this office."<sup>35</sup> Only one half of the American groups were supporting New York. Gradually the situation righted itself; AA's in this country put in some \$200.00 on 'loan'<sup>36</sup> import licences were granted and the only restriction became the capacity of the members to get the funds remitted to the States. For a while New York wondered where all the books were going but Ian pointed out that membership here tended to be way ahead of the Directory figures, "In fact there are many more books in this country than have come to us — and still we are short. The alcoholic in his cups will not bother to get a copy from the library we find, but this does not mean he is not good material and able to recover. I feel books are a must."<sup>37</sup> Through all this time there was a clear understanding that every piece of literature, every book, every pamphlet would be paid for. And they were.

Just as each group was to be self-supporting through the contribution of its own members, Intergroup too, could not look to sources outside the fellowship for funding, and was entirely reliant on member groups for operating expenses. A petty cash box was on the table at each meeting, and donations from delegates and observers provided the money needed for postage and other minor items.

The reliance on the Big Book and the need for a service structure sprang out of the North American experience rather than from a felt need in this country. When Jack Alexander's article appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, membership quadrupled in the last six months of 1941 from 2,000 to 8,000 members. It was no longer possible for each enquiry to be followed up with a personal visit and New York, where the Big Book was published, became the distribution centre. The need to respond to the flood of letters pouring in led to the setting up of a service centre.

Therefore, it is interesting to note that here, after the initial fund was set up by the member groups, the response in terms of sales was consistently disappointing and it was only substantial purchases by groups in other parts of New Zealand and outside this particular Intergroup which kept the literature fund

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going. It was not until March 1963, exactly five years after the establishment of Intergroup, that sales put pressure on the stock available. It is ironic that the demand for literature which, in America, led to the servicing of members from a central office, did not eventuate in this country where the facility was set up but not fully utilised.<sup>38</sup>

In March 1963 it was decided to supply free literature to all institutional groups in the area and later in the year, (June) this proposal was extended to provide each new group with a parcel of literature to the value of three pounds. Because sales were not as high as anticipated, Intergroup were forced a year later to move back from this position and agreed, 'That up to 50% of gross profit from the sale of literature be made available for supply of literature to institutions or new groups in the Central Assembly area.'<sup>39</sup> We can only speculate as to the reasons for the failure of member groups to make better use of the literature made available; the situation changed as time went by but it was a long haul to the point where, in 1970 over 6,000 pieces of literature were distributed nationally.<sup>40</sup>

There is an immediacy about recordings and tapes of speakers on AA and, from the beginning, they have been as valuable as any other way of communicating the message. As early as July 1947 Bobbie B. advised Ian that a set of Bill W.'s records were on their way by air express. Ian had written earlier on 30 June "I am absolutely thrilled to hear of the recordings made by Bill . . . I wonder if any one of you would like to risk the cost and send me a set air-mail. I will get the cost to you in the long run. Air freight may be as expensive as the records or more but it will make the difference between getting them in about ten days and two months or more."

Later, on 14 August in a personal note to Bill W. Ian spoke of the tremendous impact the records made on him, "I wish I could adequately describe the beauty of the peaceful setting in which I listened to the recorded talk made by you . . . I carried them round for 24 hours impatiently waiting for an opportunity to hear them as I am away from home." Ian copied these recordings to send to Lillian Roth and added a special message for Australia AA's so that she could take them with her to Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and other cities.

In the northern summer of 1950 AA held its first international convention in Cleveland, Ohio when the Twelve Traditions of unity were adopted by the fellowship. In September the same year recordings of the big meetings, Dr. Bob's last talk and the Traditions Meeting were offered to AA in New Zealand but, as they were recorded at 33½ rpm, it was, amazingly, another three years before they could be generally used in this country. In 1950 only the broadcasting studios were equipped with long playing turntables; by the middle of the decade they were to be commonplace. When they finally arrived in 1955, Ian wrote to Bill W. "No words can express our deep sense of gratitude to you for the happy thought that led to you sending those records. They arrived at the end of April and have already been heard by dozens of AA's who

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have listened with rapt attention as the great story unfolds. I think they have come at a very fortunate time; for AA is well established and receiving many calls for help and it will be most important that we go forward with unity."

About this time tape recorders too, became generally used and one of the first activities taken up by the new Intergroup was the setting up of a tape library. Groups, too experimented with this method of communication and the experience of the Wellington Group as reported in 'Mainstay' September, 1955 is worth repeating:

"Joy reports from Wellington:— Bob H. said farewell to the Wellington Group a couple of weeks ago, prior to his departure for the U.S.A. A suggestion was made that we hire a tape recorder for the purpose of recording our meeting, after which each member would say a few words to our AA friends in America and Bob would take this tape over with him. This idea was enthusiastically received and arrangements for the hire left in the hands of Leslie.

The day of the meeting I happened to meet Leslie worriedly sipping at his coffee in the same restaurant as I. He was flat out trying to fit in various jobs such as a trip to the Reserve Bank for dollars for Grapevine, 12th. stepping, and of course, the all important tape recorder.

The meeting duly assembled and Ian really excelled himself in his opening address — and that's certainly saying something, as we all know. I personally took particular care to articulate clearly, enunciate carefully etc. when repeating the Serenity Prayer, racking my brains to recall all my elocution teacher had tried to drum into my embryo alcoholic head many, many years ago. I had even taken a little extra care when applying my lipstick for the occasion. What effect I hoped this would have on the tape recorder I am not quite sure — must have been a hangover from the days when I was personally working hard at establishing closer relations with the United States back in 1944.

The meeting was an excellent one, Bob made a very nice *au revoir* speech and I sat back feeling very proud to be a member of Wellington Group and thinking what a wonderful organisation AA is and how close it brings all countries in the world. My power of concentration is still not good and my mind was far away with Bob and his first meeting in the U.S.A. when our tape recording would be played. I came out of my roseate dream with a start. Ian was laughing, Bob was looking slightly bewildered and Leslie's jaw had dropped somewhere below his chest. That's right — we had forgotten to switch on the tape recorder.

There was, of course, general laughter — except from Leslie, who incidentally is our Treasurer. "Humph!! No laughing matter, the cost of hiring that tape recorder is one pound — absolute waste of money and time."

We have promised Bob that we will send a recording over to him of one of our meetings but so far no-one has had the courage to approach our Treasurer regarding the hire."

## *"The Groups come together"*

In October 1958 Intergroup set up a Tape Library with Bob C. as first custodian. From the beginning the library was a success and by early the following year 28 tapes were available for group use, increased to 43 by May 1960. Initially, the library held mainly American inspired talks — Marty Mann, Dick C., Bill W., Dr. Bob, and Charles Laughton. Father John Doe too. But increasingly, New Zealand tapes were added: Ian McE.'s talk in Palmerston North 10 May 1958; an Auckland Public Meeting; Dr. Mailing's broadcast talk 16 August 1959; a Hawera Public Meeting; an AA Meeting in Wellington Library Hall; and a Hastings Public Meeting 28 May 1960. In 1962 the Tape Library was conducted from Wanganui by Eric P. and, in contrast to the sale of literature, was in great and continuous demand.

In three areas, the initiatives sponsored by the AA Intergroup Service Committee (later the Central Area Assembly) merged with, and became the basis of the work undertaken by the General Service Conference. These were the provision of literature, the tape library and the rooms set up in Wellington.

'Mainstay' remained the personal effort of Doug McL. and Don McL. in Palmerston North until it was handed over to the General Service Conference at the inaugural meeting of delegates at 'Arahina' on 8 August 1964.

The rooms in Wellington were seen as an essential part of the Intergroup's work. Not only as a place in central Wellington where AA's could meet for mutual support, but also as a base from which the services could be provided. There was always the intention to eventually staff the rooms on a full-time basis. First mooted at the Intergroup meeting on 26 October 1958 when a fund was set up — 33 pounds donated there and then — it was another two years before rooms were found at 208 Lambton Quay. The rent was guaranteed by thirty members who took out 'debentures' for five pounds (some ten pounds) towards furnishings and running expenses. Groups were encouraged to use the rooms and from the outset two groups: the Monday night meeting transferred from St. Andrews on the Terrace and the Sunday night group moved from Lipman Street, Courtney Place.

By 1961 the rooms were open daily manned by Norah B. In 1964 there was a move to new rooms in the McKenzie Building on Lambton Quay but the service to AA's continued through these changes in site.

In addition to these activities — the setting up of a tape library, the printing of pamphlets, importing and distributing literature, organising public meetings and working towards the setting up of a permanent office, this Intergroup gradually became the catalyst and focus for a New Zealand wide service set-up. The process was gradual and grew slowly without undue pressure on members. Looking back it is not always easy to understand the difficulties and constraints experienced.

The turning point came with the 13th meeting held in Hawera on 14th November 1959 when it was agreed that the next meeting be held at 'Arahina' early in March 1960. The venue had already been booked by Alanon but, by agreement, it was arranged that both Alanon and AA In-

### ***“The Groups come together”***

tergroup would hold their separate meetings and combine for an Open Meeting on the evening of Saturday 5th March. In this way there began an association with Alanon and the earlier informal ‘get-togethers’ at Arahina merged with the mainstream activities of the fellowship. It was at this meeting, too, that another circle became complete with the announcement of the formation of Canterbury AA Intergroup Service Committee making all centres within reach of an Intergroup.

The 5 March meeting of Intergroup had perhaps the largest and most representative gathering of AA’s so far. Not only members from each group in the Province but also Jim M., Jack P. and Bobby from Auckland, Ted B. from Christchurch, Maurice K. from Canterbury and Murdoch Y. from Dunedin. Ian McE as Chairman, expressed the hope that, with the progress of AA in New Zealand, it might soon be desirable to form a ‘General Service Committee’ so as to give a fuller service to AA groups generally. Whilst it was not the first time that this concept had been raised the timing was significant in the light of the numbers present and the wide range of groups represented.



**Arahina, Marton — Photo — Girl Guides Assoc**



**The Refectory Building Massey University — Photo — Massey University**

## CHAPTER 5

### MAINSTAY

Whilst there had been early regional AA magazines in the U.S.A. — the 'Cleveland Central Bulletin' and the Los Angeles 'Eye-Opener' and several others, a new magazine caught on nationally when it first appeared in June 1944. Originally called the 'Grapevine' the name was later changed to the 'AA Grapevine' when it was found that the FBI had an in-house magazine of the same name.<sup>1</sup>

Ian was an early subscriber and it must have been with the 'AA Grapevine' in mind that he suggested to two Palmerston North members, Doug and Don that they produce a New Zealand AA magazine. Their main qualifications according to Ian being "Doug's got the equipment and you both have the time."

The first issue was one foolscap sheet turned out on the duplicator in the office where Doug worked. Right up until the moment of production a name had not been decided on. Don recalls, "We were on our way to the AA meeting at Petone. In the car were Jack, Margery, Keith, Douglas and myself. We wanted some name which contained two 'A's' MAINBRACE was mentioned because of the name of a successful racehorse, but it was discarded because MAIN BRACE also had the flavour of Navy Rum about it. It was Margery who came up with the name 'MAINSTAY'."<sup>2</sup>

Production shifted from Doug's office to his home when all his family became involved in the despatch.

In retrospect Doug has this to say about the young magazine:

*"We had advertised that an AA meeting would be at a certain place at a certain time. In the early days generally Don and I were the only ones there, and sometimes when Don had some 12th Stepping to do, I was the only one. But we were determined someone should be there just in case someone else turned up. Sometimes they did — a car load or two might arrive from anywhere within reach. At one stage we had Stan from Hunterville who would come when he could — that was only an hour's drive to a meeting. We were glad other Groups adopted this simple thing — that come hell or high water there would be someone at the meeting place at the meeting time. We often headed for Wellington, Lower Hutt or Petone, depending on which night it was, quite confident that someone would be there. And there always was, even though AA's were not numerous then. Mainstay was often described as a meeting in print. There were a lot of loners who so regarded it. Many wrote to say how they appreciated it and waited for it to arrive each month. There is also the other side of the coin, and the 12th Stepping aspect of 'Mainstay' had, I believe, a big bearing on my own sobriety."<sup>3</sup>*



## *'Mainstay'*

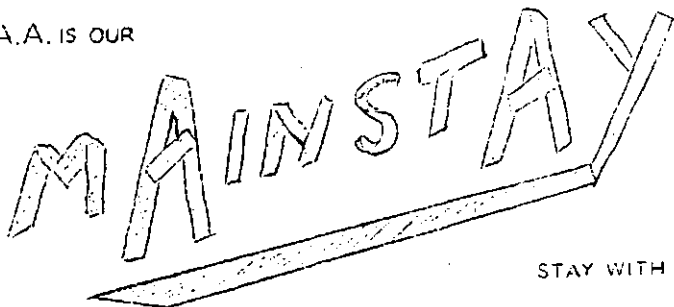
From these small beginnings 'Mainstay' grew in size and circulation but always remained a forum where AA's could share their experiences. The policy of editorial independence was established from the beginning<sup>4</sup> and the publication solicited contributions and constructive criticism with equal emphasis. Notices of coming events and reports of past happenings had their place, but they were not as important as the sharing of AA experience as it would take place in a meeting.

It had been the intention of the editors that 'Mainstay' be held in trust until such time as AA in New Zealand as a whole was able and willing to take the magazine over.<sup>5</sup> Almost ten years were to go by before this happened. There was an early suggestion that it become the responsibility of the Wellington Provincial AA Intergroup Service Committee when this group met for the first time on 15 March 1958 but nothing came of the Proposal. Doug and Don carried on as co-editors.<sup>6</sup> It is, in retrospect, fortunate that 'Mainstay' remained outside the purview of any one AA coalition. At the inaugural meeting of the delegates to the New Zealand General Service Conference of AA at 'Arahina' Marton on 8 August 1964 AA in New Zealand finally took responsibility for 'Mainstay' and the founding co-editors could lay down the task.

# MAINSTAY — THE FIRST ISSUE

NEWS & VIEWS OF A.A. IN N.Z.

A.A. IS OUR



STAY WITH US

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June 1, 1955.

P. O. Box 398, Palmerston North.

Vol. 1 No. 1

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## In the Cause of A.A. Unity.

Since the arrival of A.A. in this country some ten years ago, through the human agency of our Ian, the Fellowship has extended so as to embrace a quite considerable crowd of people spread over the whole length of our Islands. Some centres have quite surprising numbers (and characters) attending regular meetings, while in numerous places, loners are keeping in contact with the groups by correspondence. Though in Palmerston North we have a group (be it ever so humble), we have extensive file the isolation of the loner, interspersed with festivals of A.A. when we have gone visiting or have received visitors. We rather like this sharing of the A.A. Fellowship, and hope the idea be extended by way of this small news-sheet. If all groups will keep us posted on their activities, and send reports of meetings and discussions, we can all better share our gatherings and ideas. The loner can get the benefit of the group discussions and perhaps even contribute to some. We want material of all sorts, so come on, you lucky people, if you can't get a word in edgewise at the meetings, air your opinions here.

\*\*\*\*\*

## The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing.

I went 12th. stepping in response to a letter from a lady whose son was afflicted with our common illness. After talking with the prospect and giving him my story and adding that I had lost all compulsion to drink since I had found A.A. he showed such enthusiasm for his prospects of a new way of life he would insist that I stay for dinner and meet his parents and other members of the family. I enjoyed a sumptuous meal, and Dad and Mum were as pleased as all parents when they see hope for their son's survival. Alcoholics Anonymous had an honoured place in their home that day.



**The Very Rev Dr L.M. McFerran (Father Mack)**

## CHAPTER 6

# 1960 — 1964

## The AA Service Council

### Part One

On 2 July, 1960 AA world-wide celebrated its 25th Anniversary. Long Beach, Florida was the scene of the Third AA Convention when some thousands of alcoholics gathered for a time of re-dedication; in this country about 150 AA's and their spouses attended an Anniversary dinner in the Winter Show Buildings, Wellington for both a celebration and a time of dedication and commitment. With so many visitors present the opportunity was taken to discuss the proposed Service Council at an Intergroup meeting held for this purpose in the afternoon preceding the dinner.

The meeting was a watershed. Whilst some reservations remained — Auckland Intergroup were still not keen on the idea of a permanent central office in Wellington — Jack P. from Auckland was the seconder of a motion proposed by Ian McE.:—

*'that a sub-committee comprising one member from each of the four main centres be set up immediately. The elected member in each centre to refer the proposal of a New Zealand Service Board to the various groups in his Inter-group area for general discussion at group level. The four sub-committee members to keep in touch with each other by correspondence in the interim, and just as soon as some general agreement is reached, they make arrangements to attend the next meeting of Wellington Intergroup and report.'*<sup>1</sup>

Jack P.'s support for this proposal was significant. When the idea of a Service Council was first mooted, most Auckland members opposed it; the most compelling objection being on the grounds of finance. The new rooms at 78 Albert Street had not long been opened and another call for funds over and above the voluntary contribution system just getting off the ground seemed too much.<sup>2</sup> Whilst Auckland had an Intergroup Committee prior to 1958, it went into recess when there was conflict between it and the much longer established Twenty Four Hour Club which was a thriving entity as early as 1951<sup>3</sup> — perhaps the first club for AA members in Australasia. The word 'conflict' is perhaps too harsh. It was more a question of deciding on priorities and the Club was deemed more important at the time. For the same reasons that sparked the formation of the Wellington Intergroup — the supply of literature, contact with the clergy, medical profession and the newly formed National Society on Alcoholism, a Service Centre Committee was set up in Auckland in April 1958.<sup>4</sup>

## *The AA Service Council Part 1. 1960-64*

In the discussions leading up to the decision to proceed with the setting up of the Service Council it was made clear that local Intergroups could have their own offices and that the supply of literature would remain a local concern.

However, the proposed service board would be the 'voice of AA in New Zealand' responsible for broadcasting, arranging newspaper articles on a national basis and the bulk printing of New Zealand inspired literature. By December 1960 Wellington and Canterbury Intergroups had signified approval to the proposal; at the 19th meeting of the Wellington AA Intergroup held in Palmerston North on 25 February, 1961 it all came together. Des D. and Frank C., representing the Auckland AA Service Centre spoke of the 'full support given by all the groups in Auckland.' Buck B. from Bay of Plenty reported that all the groups in his area were also in agreement and it was decided:

*'That a New Zealand AA General Service Council be formed consisting of two representatives from each Service Centre or Inter Group in New Zealand. The names of the delegates to be forwarded to the Interim Secretary of the N.Z. AA General Service Council.'*<sup>5</sup>

Wes M. was made the Interim Secretary.

By April 1961 the stage was set — all Intergroups had chosen their representatives:

Auckland Service Committee: Jack P. and Jack S.

Bay of Plenty Intergroup: Buck B.

Wellington Intergroup Service Committee: Ian McE., Dick O'D., Jim A.

Canterbury Intergroup Service Committee: Jack McB., Jack K.

Otago Intergroup Service Committee: Ruth W., Jack W.

Because Bay of Plenty appointed only one representative, Wellington, covering a large area and representing the voice of 26 groups chose a third member, Jim A., to represent the Hawkes Bay, Gisborne and Wairoa districts.<sup>6</sup>

Reflecting on the events leading up to the establishment of the New Zealand AA Service Council made manifest by the election of delegates, it is clear that, whilst all Intergroups were in place by the end of 1959 — Canterbury being the last — the impetus towards the formation of the Council came almost solely from Wellington. Furthermore, the momentum over the years was maintained by a persistent core of AA's within that Intergroup, led by Ian McE. supported by Dick O'D. from Hawera and others who continuously pushed the concept of service in the widest sense. Countering this thrust was a quite strong feeling held by some AA's up until recent times, that an elaborate set-up, designed for a much larger and diverse community as found in the United States, should not be imposed on the fellowship in this country. Whilst the structure, as adopted in New Zealand for group and local organisation is based on the parent model there have been essential differences in approach.

It is as if events in this country were telescoped and some of the lessons learned in the gropings towards unity as experienced in the United States were understood here and some growing pains avoided.

As early as 1938, barely four years after Bill W. and Dr. Bob founded AA, the Alcoholic Foundation was set up in New York with a Board of five Trustees, three of whom were non-alcoholics.<sup>7</sup> The Board 'mediated' between the fellowship and the world at large but with little connection with AA's except through the co-founders. Between 1945 and 1950 a move was made to transfer the responsibility for the fellowship's service structure from this self-perpetuating unelected body to a General Service Conference of elected delegates. The first was held in New York in April, 1951 'beginning a five year experiment, linking AA's Trustees with the entire fellowship.' It was this concept of a Foundation which Ian McE. had first mooted for AA in New Zealand but at the time he was advocating it, changes were already under way in America. Instead, AA members in New Zealand took responsibility for the service structure and, at a later date invited non AA's to participate.

The delegates met for the first time in Wellington on 29 July, 1961, elected Ian McE. Chairman and decided that each Service Centre have three representatives who would serve for a period of three years. Plans were formulated to hold a Dominion-wide AA Conference in Wellington in June or July of 1962. This occasion was seen as an essential opportunity for the Council to report to the whole of the AA fellowship and to seek approval for actions taken.<sup>8</sup>

Then came a hiatus. The Council did not meet again for a year and when it did it still did not have the names of the Intergroup representatives.<sup>9</sup> In the meantime, Wellington Intergroup accepted responsibility for organising the proposed Convention but this had to be abandoned 'until more general interest was shown in the matter, especially from the South Island.'<sup>10</sup> It all must have been very discouraging but the Council pressed on and adopted a short and simple list of objectives:—

*'to assist the expansion and development of the fellowship of AA within the Dominion of New Zealand; to co-ordinate the activities of AA Intergroup, Service Centres, groups and individuals members in the endeavour to give adequate and fitting expression to the collective group conscience; liase with General Service Office in New York; liase with the AA centres in other countries; public relations at a national level; be a contact point for the public at national level and to organise a Dominion Convention every third year in the four main centres.'*<sup>11</sup>

Another attempt was made to organise a National Convention, this time for October 1963 to coincide with the projected return visit by Marty Mann, travelling under the auspices of the National Society on Alcoholism. Again, Wellington Intergroup pledged co-operation 'whether Marty Mann's visit eventuated or not.'<sup>12</sup> Once again the arrangements fell through and 1963 went by without the Convention being held. Central Area Assembly at

Gisborne on 30 March 1963 called for a Convention, and, taking advantage of the presence of Service Council members, a meeting was held at 'Ulverstone' the following day.

Alanon had booked Massey University in Palmerston North for their own annual gathering on 15 and 16 February 1964. With accommodation available for 300 people both groups could be easily accommodated and the AA Convention could proceed with a minimum of organisational fuss. At this meeting Ian McE. stepped down as Chairman and took over as secretary until the Conference. Sel C. of Auckland became Chairman.<sup>13</sup>

On 15th February the Convention was opened by the Mayor of Palmerston North, Gilbert Rennie, in the old Refectory on the Massey University campus. After lunch the plan for the General Service Conference was presented to the 120 AA's gathered. Each Area Assembly representative endorsed the proposal; Ian McE. talked of the early days leading up to the 1961 decision to form a Council whose work to date had culminated in the convening of this first New Zealand Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. It was now over to the membership to give their views. The actual decision was not to be made on the first day, and, as events unfolded, this was just as well. Whilst the weather outside was warm and sunny, inside it soon became hot and stormy. The main sticking point was the likely cost of the Service Conference and many delegates were clearly troubled by the possible burden of another obligation with quite heavy commitments already made to rooms in both Auckland and Wellington. The discussion was deadlocked; the atmosphere tense. It was a relief when a local member, Allan B. got up and said, 'look, we are all tired, how about adjourning this session, sleeping on what we have heard and coming back to it all fresh in the morning.'

Next morning, Sunday 16 February, tensions had melted away. The whole programme was ratified without delay, and extended in one important respect: Joan McC. of Taihape was appointed a delegate representing the unaffiliated groups and 'loners'. \*

Reflecting on the events of the weekend the tensions were understandable. Very early AA had the choice of either moving towards the sort of central authoritarian structure most organisations opt for, or remaining perpetually open and flexible with a minimum of central control. Apart from the devices of rotating committees with limited authority, the clear understanding in terms of Tradition Four that 'each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole,' there are, in the words of Bill W. '... two authorities which are far more effective (than human authority) One is benign the other malign.'<sup>14</sup> The first is set out in the Second Tradition: 'For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience ...' The second is alcohol itself, 'cunning, baffling, powerful.' Faced with these choices — abstinence through the AA programme, or insanity and possible death, the

\* See Appendix

First N.Z. Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.

## The AA Service Council Part 1. 1960-64

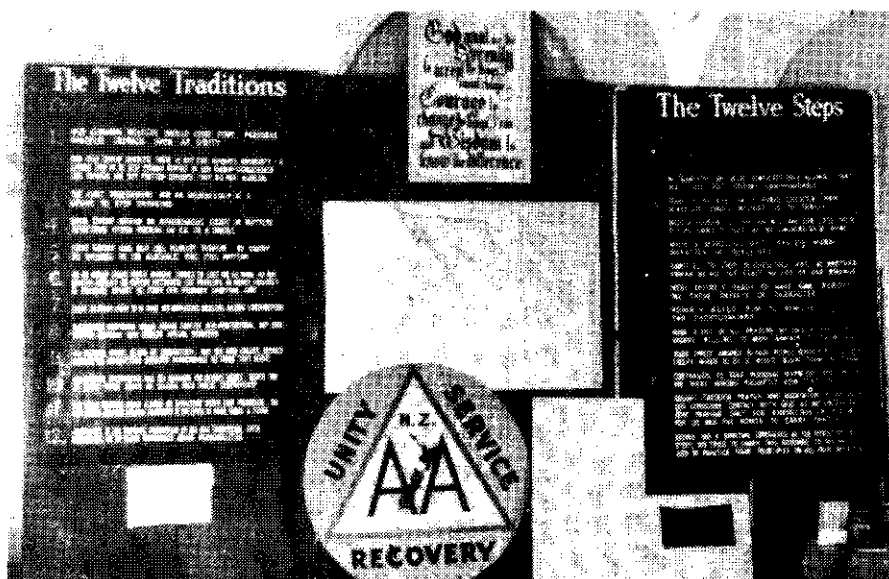
drinking alcoholic has no need of any other discipline if he or she wants to recover.

Perhaps it was as much to remind themselves as the fellowship that the letterhead of the New Zealand Service Conference of AA has at the top the words 'Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern'.

Those who participated in this historic gathering could leave secure in the knowledge that they had heeded the words of Bill W.:—

*"We must think deeply of all those sick ones still to come to AA. As they try to make their return to faith and to life, we want them to find everything in AA that we have found, and yet more, if that be possible. No care, no vigilance, no effort to preserve AA's constant effectiveness and spiritual strength will ever be too great to hold us in full readiness for the day of their homecoming."*<sup>15</sup>

Something more had been added to the life of AA in New Zealand. Over the following pages we will be looking at the work of the Service Conference in more detail.



The Stage. Massey Conference February 1964





Dr Gerry Wall M.P.

## CHAPTER 7

# 1965 — 1976

## The AA Service Council

### Part Two

Armed with the authority vested in them by the first Conference of AA in New Zealand the delegates moved into action. They met for the first time at 'Arahina' on 8 August 1964, coming together from all over New Zealand from Bill H. Kaitaia to Bill L.-S. Christchurch. True to the spirit of openness in AA about 50 members who were attending Central Area Assembly, came as observers.

On this occasion 'Mainstay' was handed over to the fellowship by editor Doug McL. of Palmerston North. Thus ending a ten year stewardship during which time the co-editors had always regarded themselves as 'trustees' of the publication until the fellowship was ready to take it over. This time had now come. A small committee — Doug McL., Snow C., Dick O'D. and Ian McE. was appointed to edit, manage and publish the magazine.

Another forward step was taken at this meeting. Having elected a small steering committee to act between meetings\* it was asked to carry out a number of tasks in the field of public relations; an area most central to the functions of the General Service Conference. We have seen how, almost twenty years earlier, Ian McE. had begun, virtually single-handed, the work of bringing AA before the public, especially those groups most likely to have contact with the drinking alcoholic: doctors, employers, clergy. Ian had also made frequent approaches to the press and had worked with radio stations. We have seen how lone AA's in various towns and cities carried this work forward; how the groups when they were formed in the early 1950's enlisted community support by fostering good relations with the medical profession, social workers, police and other agencies.

This spirit of co-operation varied with individual groups and there were some who persisted in maintaining that AA had all the answers to alcoholism and that membership in the fellowship provided the only solution to a drinking problem. It was true, that in the early days, AA members, with limited resources, were called upon to perform many tasks like nursing alcoholics through the DT's because there was no one else available.<sup>1</sup> Now, with the entry of many health professionals into the field of alcoholism and a more enlightened attitude towards the sufferer, AA could more easily concentrate on its one objective. To counter some of the parochialism within AA, Bill W. in a March 1958 article in the 'AA Grapevine', talked of the need to co-

<sup>1</sup>Chairman Sel C. Auckland; Bill L.-S. Christchurch and Ian McE. as secretary.

operate with our 'friends on the alcoholism front' and cited many people whose contribution in the areas of medicine, psychiatry and public education had done so much to advance treatment and understanding. The Traditions focus on the policy AA has adopted of 'co-operation but non-affiliation.'\*

*"They remind AA's to place the welfare of the fellowship above personal desires; that no AA member can tell other AA's what they should or should not do; that the primary aim of the fellowship is to carry the message of AA to the still suffering alcoholic; that no AA group either endorses or opposes any other enterprise and that power and prestige are eschewed lest the accompanying problems do harm to the fellowship; that AA is not to be drawn into public argument; that membership comes through attraction and mention is never made in the public media about anyone's membership in AA. Lastly the Traditions serve to remind the fellowship to place AA principles above personalities."*<sup>2</sup>

AA therefore, seeks to co-operate and to work alongside other agencies in the field. Precisely because of their knowledge and understanding of alcoholism, many AA's have been drawn to full time paid work in this field. There is no impediment to an AA member, as a private individual, from taking an active part in treatment and other programmes provided always that this is done on the basis of their professional standing, and not on their membership in AA. Those who wear two hats need to be very clear at all times whether, in any situation, they are acting in the paid (non-AA) job or functioning as a member.

The second aspect of public relations activity relates to one of the central concepts of AA — anonymity. Whilst anonymity is frequently important to the new member who is thereby protected at a tender stage of his or her sobriety, the Eleventh Tradition sets out clearly the level at which the line is drawn — in the public media — press radio TV and films. It was not always like this. The Tradition has come out of harsh experience. Because of the stigma attaching to alcoholism, there were benefits pertaining to anonymity for many, but, more importantly, anonymity was seen by the fellowship as a necessary personal sacrifice for the benefit of the whole. When AA was just beginning in the United States there were some notable recoveries through the programme made by people who were already public figures. Their stories made good newspaper copy, and through this publicity, there was an upsurge of interest and an increase in membership. It seemed that nothing but good must flow from such activities. The co-founder himself, was not immune from the temptation to tell his story in public disclosing his full name. Then came problems. The giving of oneself to others through the AA programme demands nothing in return. If there is a reward, it is through one's own continued sobriety, not fame, adulation and public attention. There were those who, with sobriety gained, wanted to sponsor hospitals, mount educational campaigns, solicit funds for alcohol research programmes, take sides in the 'wet-dry' controversy, all using the AA name in the process. Not only was the

\*See Appendix 4 for a list of AA Publications that aid Co-operation.

society being drawn into public controversy but also, for many, the old drives for power and prestige resurfaced.

Therefore, the need for anonymity at the general public level was recognised, accepted, and, since those early days, nearly always maintained. The refusal to publicise the names of leaders and members has worked for AA in another way. The fellowship has always enjoyed fair and accurate publicity — the news outlets find a refreshing change in reporting the doings of an organisation which is not wedded to the modern cult of personality. Besides, the great, famous and articulate are no more representative of AA than the most obscure member — it 'is a society of equals.'<sup>3</sup>

We have talked of the efforts made by groups to bring their existence and activities to the notice of the public. When Intergroups were formed they carried this process on a stage further. Wellington Provincial AA Intergroup Service Committee experimented from 1958 onwards with a weekly advertisement in Wellington newspapers giving group meeting times and places. Each group was asked for 5/- per week to cover costs but those unable to pay at the outset were included until such time as they were able to contribute. Money remained a problem and at the peak when eleven groups were included in the advertisement only five outside the city area made donations towards the cost. After three years the contract with the 'Dominion' was cancelled at the end of 1961 but reinstated two years later.

It is customary at public meetings to solicit donations to defray expenses. Not so on these occasions. Either the Chairman made an announcement that the only people able to put money into the hat were AA members or, alternatively, no donations were asked for at all to avoid the possibility of 'outside contributions.'

With the advent of the AA Service Council of New Zealand, the emphasis and direction taken in the area of public relations changed. Now, for the first time, there was one voice to speak on matters affecting the whole fellowship.

The importance of the press has never been underestimated. In spite of the struggle to find the money, the Wellington Provincial AA Intergroup Service Committee maintained the contract advertisements in the Wellington newspapers for some years from the time the Intergroup was first set up and we have seen how significant press notices and articles have been in steering many alcoholics towards their first contact with AA.

The Steering Committee undertook to approach the editors of 'Truth', 'New Zealand Women's Weekly', and the 'Readers' Digest' in the hope that the time might be ripe for feature articles on AA.

Arrangements were made to see a number of people, prominent in Government Departments active in the care and treatment alcoholics. Interviews took place on 17 September 1964 with Dr. Robson, Secretary for Justice, Mr Williams, Acting-Director of Prisons and Mr Watt, Chief Probation Officer for New Zealand who were advised of the formation of the Steering Committee as the official link with AA. Establishing this link was as important as the

review of Justice Department policy in respect of prison release, attendance at AA meetings and other matters of common concern.

Later in the same day our group met with Dr. Mirams, who had a deep understanding for and sympathy with AA, from the very early days.<sup>4</sup> He was accompanied by Drs. Turbot and Blake-Palmer. The policy of admitting alcoholics to General Hospitals was discussed and an undertaking was given by Dr. Turbot that this would be placed on the agenda of the Hospital Superintendents' Conference to be held in April, 1965, when the Department's wishes in this matter would be made clear, bearing in mind the autonomy of the different Boards and the varying resources each might have available for patients with special needs such as alcoholics.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Mirams also talked about the provisions of the impending Alcoholism Act and the importance of understanding and education at the public level.

A pattern of activity began to take shape. The Steering Committee met less often and the full meeting of delegates was held twice a year — the day before the annual New Zealand Assembly held alternately at Massey University and Lincoln College when delegates reported to the full membership; the second occasion midway in the year at 'Arahina'.

Ian McE. now fully occupied as Secretary and 'Mainstay' editor, was joined by Peter G. as assistant Secretary; the latter working on the first New Zealand Directory of AA groups.

By August 1965 the General Service Conference was ready to agree, at least in principle, that the literature, presently administered by Snow C., the Central Area Assembly Secretary, be purchased and taken over, but the final decision was deferred until the New Zealand Conference set down for 5-6 February 1966 at Massey University.

At this time too, preparations were made to welcome Eve M., visiting New Zealand between 19 December 1965 and 7 January 1966. Eve, on 12 months leave of absence from G.S.O. New York where she had been working for many years, planned to visit as many countries as possible. Whilst the timing was unfortunate, the best use was made of her knowledge and experience in AA.

Overseas visitors have played a crucial role in the growth of AA in New Zealand. In August 1947 Lillian Roth and Burt M. were the first AA's Ian was to meet. Alcoholics Anonymous began in Australia through the efforts of two non AA's, and one AA, all working at the Rydalmere Mental Hospital in Sydney: Dr. Sylvester M. a psychiatrist, Father Dunlea a priest and an attendant, Arch McKinnon. Dr. Sylvester corresponded with G.S.O. in New York for two years before the first Australian AA group was formed at the hospital late in 1944.<sup>6</sup>

Three years later, Dr. Sylvester was in New Zealand and such was his reputation for sympathy and understanding for AA's that Ian was convinced, until their meeting, that the doctor was a member of the fellowship. Ian was right! During those early visits to this country the doctor was speaking in his

professional capacity which was reinforced by a special empathy with those suffering from alcoholism. Years later, Dr. Sylvester M. became a member of AA. Doctor Mirams, then a medical officer at Sunnyside Hospital, recalls Ian and Dr. Sylvester calling on him in 1947 when the two were 'travelling through New Zealand trying to get some beginnings to AA.' Doctor Sylvester made a number of visits to this country and did much to increase public understanding of alcoholism.

In her letters to Ian, Bobbie B., in addition to giving him the names of struggling AA's in other countries he could write to and share with them his experiences in starting out, also put him in touch with AA's visiting New Zealand, frequently in the course of their work. In a letter dated 27 April 1949 Bobbie wrote, "You may have a treat in store for you soon. My very good friend, Captain Jack S. is the Captain of the S/S Stanvac Durban owned by the Socony Vacuum Oil Co. Jack writes me that he expects to be in New Zealand sometime soon and is going to get in touch with you if at all possible. Jack is one of the finest AA's I have ever had the privilege of knowing and I do want you two to meet. Jack can tell you lots about us in New York and when he returns, he can do the same for me about you." Captain Jack was well known in AA. Bill W. talks of 'Captain Jack in a Standard Oil tanker, spreading AA as he sailed.'<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, two women visitors to this country Marty Mann and Lillian Roth were two prominent AA's in widely different fields, who broke their anonymity at the public level 'for the sake of others' and whilst no apparent harm came from these episodes, which all happened in the 1940's, the experience gained led to a strengthening of the Tradition on anonymity. The late Marty Mann, a patient of Dr. Tiebot, was the first woman in AA and later went on to become the founder and Executive Director of the National Council on Alcoholism — the American counterpart of our National Society on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency. It was under the auspices of the latter Society that Marty Mann made her second visit to New Zealand in 1963. Eve M., at the very centre of G.S.O. work had very valuable experiences to share on her New Zealand visit, brief though it was, and a taped discussion with local members made in 1966 has relevance even today.\*

Whilst these events were taking place in New Zealand, AA itself was celebrating its 30th Anniversary at an International Convention, held for the first time outside the United States in Toronto, Canada on July 2-4th 1965. The Toronto Declaration affirmed the need for service and the tasks yet unfinished in these words:

***"I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help,  
I want the hand of AA always to be there,  
and for that I am responsible."***

*"And yet, as Bill W. has recently pointed out in 'The AA Grapevine', millions of dying alcoholics have never yet heard of AA's language of the heart, do not even know where it is spoken."*

\*See Appendix 5.

## The AA Service Council Part 2. 1965-76

*"Will someone be here to speak it to them when they come?*

*"That responsibility is yours and mine. For that reason, no AA Anniversary can ever be just a reminder of the past. For the sake of the next sick drunk who comes in the door, and for the sake of tomorrow's sobriety for all of us, the AA story must never end yesterday, but always be Beginning . . ."*<sup>9</sup>

With the service framework in place we come to the last ten years of our history — the period 1966 to 1976. AA in New Zealand has been responsive to changing needs and the service structure has responded in significant ways. Let us look at the areas of activity which engaged the attention of 'our trusted servants' over this decade.

### Literature

In February 1966, Snow C. representing Central Area Assembly, passed the entire stock (about \$500.00 worth) to the New Zealand General Service Conference who were ready to take over this responsibility.

For almost 20 years Central Area Assembly had imported and distributed AA literature for all who needed it. Other Area Assemblies, notably Auckland had followed suit. Snow C. agreed to continue giving his expertise and advice by attending to all details of Customs entries and overseas payments.

The following year there was discussion on producing literature in New Zealand but it was not felt opportune to do anything on a large scale and only a few small items were printed here.

In September 1968 a General Service office was rented in Wellington and a convenient and efficient service established for the despatch of books and pamphlets from a very complete stock. By 1974 increased prices and an unfavourable exchange rate forced the cancellation of imports from Australia, and most books and pamphlets were received from America.

In 1973 the General Service Conference decided that, in future, only Conference approved literature would be stocked. The Auckland Service centre is now the source of supply for literature from other sources and enquiries are directed to them.

In a report to the World Service Meeting October 5-7, 1978 it was stated: "Over the years since 1966 the quantity of imports and distribution of AA books and pamphlets has gone on increasing to the stage where now a stock of \$12,000 is held at G.S.O. and the literature account is now able to pay \$1,200 a year into the Conference Account. In 1975 25,000 pieces of literature were despatched from G.S.O. which is more than treble what it was in 1966."

### Pamphlets

The range of pamphlets printed in New Zealand, 'This is Alcoholics Anonymous', 'Who Me?', 'A Doctor's Approach', 'Emotional Sobriety' — a letter by Bill W. and various wallet cards, was extended in 1973 with the publication of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and the Serenity Prayer in Maori.

Jim M. a Pakeha alcoholic with twenty-six years of sobriety, spent six years, assisted by sympathetic Maori and Islander friends, getting material from two AA pamphlets — 'Is AA for You?' and 'This is AA' translated into six languages — Maori, Tongan, Niuean, Samoan, Raratongan and Fijian. His addiction to alcohol wrecked his first marriage to a Niuean girl in spite of the help he received from her family with his problem. A subsequent marriage to a woman of joint European Fijian ancestry too, was threatened by the wilder shores of booze but, with his entry into AA came a desire to repay a debt to his Islander friends. Close family contacts and travels in the South Pacific had given him an understanding of their cultures and the damage alcohol can do to them. A Pakeha friend, John, also married to a Pacific Islander, joined him in setting up the South Sea Island Group, where people from these societies could feel relaxed and be at home. John said of his efforts, "Information about alcoholism in English is not much help to people whose native languages have no word for that problem. It was essential, I thought, for them to have the facts set out clearly in their own tongues."<sup>10</sup>

The new office at 175 Vivian Street, Wellington, was both a challenge and a burden. In spite of every effort to publicise the existence of and the work undertaken by the office — storage and despatch of literature, secretarial work and the printing of 'Mainstay' — appeals for funding on the suggested basis of \$1.00 per year for every member, produced disappointing results initially. Delegates to the Conference were asked to make themselves known to all groups in their area and to be willing to discuss with them the operations of the General Service Conference. In August 1968 Ian McE. was appointed Executive Officer at a modest salary.

The volume of work undertaken began to build up and, for a period 1971-72 Graham M. helped Ian on a part-time basis. In August 1972 Ian's resignation as Executive Officer was received with great regret. He had suffered his first stroke, which forced him to reduce the level of his activities.

At the August 1974 meeting of the Conference, David M. was appointed full-time Office Manager. The decision to go ahead was based partly on improved communications from 1973 with a flow-on effect on the Conference's finances, and, partly on the knowledge that, with faith, funding would be forthcoming. It had always been stressed to members that, 'these services were not a new development, but the normal extension of services that we always needed and given since AA began in New Zealand in 1946.'<sup>11</sup>

In the year 1972-73 the Conference finances doubled, individual donations increased by one-third and a reserve fund, to be added to as finances permitted, was set up. At the same time, the fellowship continued to support central Intergroup offices in each of the four main centres with paid secretarial help offering a range of services in support of local groups.

In August 1966 a guide for the conduct of General Service Conferences was received from New York raising, not for the first time, the proposal of non AA membership of the Conference. In spite of a mixed response from Area



Assemblies it was decided to go ahead: Seen as essential to the success of the project was the need to attract people who would be much more than figureheads: who would be able to attend Conferences at Massey and Lincoln; give of their time and interest; be known nationally; be willing to make contact with their non-AA counterparts in overseas Conferences, and above all, have empathy with AA. A tall order indeed! By August the following year three people fulfilling these criteria had been appointed — Mr Russell Laurenson, a Wellington businessman, past Governor of Rotary and a member of the Broadcasting Corporation; Sir John Walsh, past President of NSAD and Dean of the Dental School, Otago University and Father McFerran, Director Family Guidance Centre, Anglican City Mission, Auckland and previously Director of the Alcoholism Foundation of British Colombia. Regretfully, Sir John Walsh was forced to retire a year later. Subsequent non-AA members have been, Dr. Fraser McDonald, Dr. John Robson and Dr. G. Wall, M.P.



**Dr John Robson**

## **The Coming Of Age Of Alcoholics Anonymous In New Zealand**

### **The Very Rev. Dr. L.M. McFerran**

The coming of age of Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand and my own 21 years of association with the Fellowship coincided with my being asked to serve as a non-alcoholic member of the General Service Board. Since my first accompanying of a sick alcoholic to an AA meeting in Toronto, Canada in 1946, held in the basement of a church, suitably named after the saint of lost causes, St. Jude, I had spent a great part of my priestly ministry fellowshiping with alcoholics. Like another Episcopalian priest, Dr. Samuel Shoemaker, I marvelled at how God had through AA "come to ordinary men and women with a great need who had found a great Answer and who did not hesitate to make it known wherever they could". I also recognized that in a sense the invitation for non-alcoholics to share in the work of the General Service Board was another turning point in the development of the Fellowship in N.Z. I accepted this opportunity to serve the suffering alcoholic as a great privilege and honour.

I remember that period of 1968-70 of sharing with another non-alcoholic, Russell Laurenson, as a time of not just being a helper but as real partners within the Fellowship. We were asked by the General Service Board to share insights, make recommendations and to do some public relations on behalf of the Fellowship. We were reminded that the original co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob, envisaged the sharing non-alcoholic as being "a voice for AA". Russell diligently set about to initiate and produce a TV program that would publicize AA, while at the same time keeping the anonymity of the participating members. My own role was a good deal more at the grass roots level within the community. During 1969 I recall giving some 187 addresses to community and church groups and writing numerous articles for national papers and periodicals in which much of the emphasis was given to the movement of AA. I attempted to visit as many AA open meetings and institutional groups as I could, in the three Area Assemblies. It was a privilege to attend over 100 meetings of the Fellowship and to be asked even to chair the public meeting of the Annual Convention at Massey in February 1969.

It was a time of exceptional growth of the Fellowship in N.Z. I recall Ian M. telling me when I came to share on the General Service Board that there were some 85 AA groups with about 1100 members throughout N.Z. During the next few years dozens of additional groups were formed and the membership literally blossomed. It is the people of principle in the movement that makes it all work. I owe a personal debt to both N.Z. co-founders Ian M. and Alf J. as well as to Lindsay M., Selwyn C., Jim C. and Jimmy M., and many others who guided me during my time on the Board. We were blessed at the time to have had Bill L-S. as our Board Chairman. One of his philosophical concepts rubbed off on to me. "Never do anything which cannot be undone if need be." After the establishing of a General Service Office in Wellington in 1968 the

non-alcoholic partners were great supporters of the Fellowship's decision to participate in the First World Service Meeting and Ian M. and Irvan T. represented us in New York in 1969.

My time on the General Service Board was a productive time of learning. The wisdom of AA in working from the individual alcoholic through the group conscience up/down via the delegates to the Board and not the other way around. The power of principles rather than the influence of personalities, regardless of the charismatic characters found within the Fellowship. Implementing policy not on the basis of the force of a majority or even of settling for a compromise but the strength of the Fellowship is sufficient that it can afford to delay changes until it is accepted that such changes respond to the needs of all AA members.

One of the highest accolades that I ever received was to read in the periodical "Box 459" of the General Service Office of AA New York "The appointment of three non-alcoholics, well known men with time to devote to AA has been an unqualified success." I shall always be grateful for the trust that the Fellowship accorded to me in their spirit of graciousness. Thank God Alcoholics Anonymous continues to be an inspiration to all of us who are concerned and care for our fellowmen.

*Th. Lynch.*

\* \* \*

The door was opened on wider horizons in 1968 with the receipt, from New York of the suggestion that AA take the first step towards the formation of a World Service Conference. New York felt that many problems of growth, public relations, anonymity, self support, literature printing and distribution, relations with treatment centres, required an exchange of information and experience at an international level. Whilst agreeing to the proposal in principle, members felt unable to do more in the meantime, lest funds be diverted from unsatisfied domestic needs. As it transpired, New Zealand did not miss out on this important event — at the February 1969 meeting of the General Service Conference at Lincoln College, Ian McE. and Irvan T. from Timaru were elected delegates to the New York World Service Conference. This country has continued its representation ever since at this biennial event.

The statement has been made that 'AA is fellowship as well as programme' whilst we have been looking at the way in which the programme has been set up to carry through the wishes of the members, we have still only been talking about the framework, the bones, as it were, not really the substance — the fellowship. More than once Bill W. has talked of the fellowship as a family. He talks of "the kinship of suffering . . . the language of the heart . . ." and the idea of AA as home ". . . for the sake of the next drunk who comes in the

door . . ." the images of community resonate. The system is simple and fluid. No move is made without substantial backing from members and nothing is done which cannot easily be undone. Apart from simple 'bylaws' incorporating the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and some clauses setting out periods of service and replacement of delegates, there is little in the way of rules as most organisations have them.<sup>12</sup>

Power in organisations lies totally in relationships; it is impossible for a person or a group of people to exercise power in isolation. The central concept of power can be expressed simply by saying that I have power over another when I can get that person to do something he or she would not otherwise do. That is, my power lies in the other person's dependency. But when the alcoholic, makes the admission that he is powerless over alcohol, that his life is unmanageable, and that he needs the fellowship to restore him to the human race, the answer comes back clearly that the fellowship needs him. As Ernest Kurtz has put it the essence of AA is 'the shared honesty of mutual vulnerability openly acknowledged.' "Alcoholics," Bill W. was fond of saying "are all or nothing people."

Whatever personal reasons a person may use to drink to excess — to gain control, to transcend his human condition, to iron out life's problems, can become trapped in a world growing increasingly unreal as normal human relationships slip away. Physical, mental and spiritual dependence on alcohol follows. The very medium chosen to enhance life becomes the agent of its destruction. AA instinctively moved away from the Oxford Groups 'Four Absolutes' on the grounds that there were special dangers for the alcoholic with his obsessive drive to perfection of 'going broke on this sort of perfection — trying to get too good by Thursday,' another of Bill W.'s expressions. Rather, AA promoted a doctrine of sweet reasonableness, and in many pamphlets and in the books, mainly written by Bill W. counselled growth and progress, rather than an expectation of 100% success from the word go.

One of the keys to organisational success is to be very clear about objectives. The more simply and precisely these can be stated the greater the chance that everyone in the organisation will understand them and be able to play their part in seeing that they are achieved. The first objective of AA says nothing about the recovering alcoholic, has no word on sobriety. Instead, quite clearly:

*"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on AA unity".*

Without AA unity the alcoholic seeking help would not have the fellowship to turn to. Within the fellowship there are no rules, only suggested courses of action based on experience. Long before the counter-culture of the 1960's sought to give organisations a human face and to make them more responsive to the needs of those they were set up to serve, AA in Father Edward Dowling's words 'has proved that democracy is therapy.'<sup>13</sup> Dr. Fraser McDonald has described AA as 'a potent amalgam of theocracy, dictatorship,

democracy and anarchy in which each alcoholic feels a real part of the organisation . . . ' and he goes on to say ' . . . astonishing similarities to what I am sure the theologians of the Christian Church were fumbling towards when they spoke about people being 'a part of the body of Christ'.'"<sup>4</sup>

The prime unit is the AA group, totally autonomous except in matters affecting the fellowship as a whole. The fellowship, which is the organisation's reason for being is embodied in the smallest unit. The larger coalitions exist to service these groups whose attention is focussed on the next drunk who comes in the door. There is no power, only service. So loose is the organisation that, although some form of incorporation has been considered from time to time, it has not been thought necessary to proceed.

Our story ends as it began with the 30th Anniversary Dinner at Massey University on 2 February 1976. Ian McE.'s story was told first — we now give the talk by Dr. T.C. Maling, then Senior Medical Officer, Queen Mary Hospital, Hamner.

*"I stand here with very mixed feelings. I feel very honoured to be asked to propose this toast tonight. I am very conscious of my limitations and this makes me somewhat nervous, but also I sense that I am among friends, and this gives me a lot of comfort.*

*My first contact with AA was some 26-27 years ago, when I was deputising for our Superintendent at Queen Mary and a message came through to me saying that a Mr McE. wished to see me. In came a very large, fit-looking man, who sat down opposite me and told me something about what had happened to him and of his recovery. Now at this stage I didn't know what an alcoholic was. I didn't have any alcoholic patients; alcoholism meant absolutely nothing to me. So I only hope that Ian was not too disappointed with my reaction that day. It makes me blush when I think how uninterested I must have appeared.*

*However, time went by and in the space of the next year or so I did have my first alcoholic patient, but again I was abysmally ignorant and, again as time went by, I had a second alcoholic patient, but somehow this one was different, as far as I was concerned. This one had really plumbed the depths of despair and degradation. He had drunk himself out of his practice. He was a doctor. He had been in various institutions and when he came to us I can remember him telling me that in all the dark and depressing times he had been through, there was just one ray of hope, and this had come through his contact with AA. So I began to prick up my ears a little bit and began to ask him a few questions. I read through the Big Book — there was not a great deal of literature about at that time other than the Big Book — and I gradually began to learn some of the needs of the alcoholic in recovery.*

*At this stage AA was really in its infancy but we were very fortunate to have some very dedicated members in Christchurch. We were 80 miles*

away and we used to badger people into organising transport to send down a car load to Christchurch, but this was not always a success, because some of my clients had other ideas as to how they were going to spend their time. However these good AA friends in Christchurch kept coming up to us and they shared their experience with the patients we had in the hospital and, I am glad to say that this service has been continued, and expanded, and is still a very precious thing to us in Hanmer and to me it is a living example of AA at work in the community. Gradually, with the help of these people in Christchurch we were able to establish our own meeting in the hospital. At the time I am speaking about we now had grown to a minimum of 3 or 4 alcoholic patients and gradually as we rehabilitated them, as we used to do in those days both in jobs in the hospital and in jobs in the village, some of these people felt the need for their own group. Originally this started in a private home and from there in 1960 it spread to a regular Wednesday night meeting in the Anglican Church Hall in Hanmer. These meetings still continue today. Early last year the local group thought it necessary to have an additional meeting and they started having one every Sunday evening.

Now at the time I have been speaking about Queen Mary was a hospital which dealt with what used to be called "Functional Nervous Disorders". That is to say, people who were tense or anxious or depressed, but gradually over the years the numbers of these declined and the number of people with drinking problems increased until finally, a few years ago, we had to make a decision that we would not take any patients other than those who had a drinking problem, so the whole nature of the hospital had changed. This meant that we had to sit down and work out a scheme for people with a drinking problem. The scheme we evolved placed particular emphasis on what we considered were three fundamental aspects of recovery in a hospital setting and these were Education, Group Therapy and Alcoholics Anonymous. I don't think that, speaking for myself, I would want to change any of those today.

If AA is one of the essential components of treatment, as we see it to be, then I think it follows that the main objective in treatment is sobriety. All of us who have an experience in treating the alcoholic know that there are occasions when alcoholics can have a drink without that drink leading to uncontrolled drinking, and I think too that all of us engaged in trying to help the alcoholic can recall a few patients who have seemingly been able to control their drinking.

In my own experience, I could count these on the fingers of one hand. And I use the word "seemingly" because in this context I just want to tell you a little about one particular patient, because to me there is a very big message here. Quite simply, this was a man who was in Hanmer on two occasions. There was an interval of 8 years between his admissions. When he came back the second time, he told me that he had had five years when he had not had a drink at all and then he had gone back to trying to control his

drinking in the last three years. When he sobered up again and was thinking straight, he said to me "If you had asked me two years ago if I was controlling my drinking I would have said "Yes but", "now today I have quite a different idea about it. Those first 5 years when I put alcohol out of my life I was free and I was relaxed and I was contented. For the last three years it has been a continuing struggle and I have been tense and I can see now that those years did not compare at any stage with my earlier years when I had put alcohol right out of mind." I thought there was a pretty big message in this for most alcoholics, but I suppose it is the wish of every alcoholic, early in the treatment to be able to control his drinking.

My own view is that with things as they are in the treatment of alcoholism today, it is much easier for the alcoholic to learn to live a sober life than it is for the alcoholic to attempt to try and learn on what occasions it might be safe for him to have a drink.

I have endeavoured to outline, as briefly as I can, the growth of AA in one small part of this country. In Hanmer because is the area I know, but what has happened there has been repeated throughout this country and I think that the seed which I imported from America 30 years ago is well and truly planted. It has grown into a substantial tree and many of you here tonight are the fruit of that tree. I have no doubt what so ever in my mind about the value of AA and I would go along with Dr. Ruth Fox who said that, in her view, the best treatment for alcoholism was Alcoholics Anonymous and she urged that every sufferer from this illness should be encouraged to join this group. An alcoholic in recovery needs a continuing support group. He needs a group that is going to remind him of his predicament. He needs a group that is going to keep him cut down to size, and AA provides all of these, as well as understanding, fellowship and friendship. All of this was said much better than I can say it, by one of the Founders of AA two years before the message came to New Zealand when Bill said "AA is a Society where men and women understand each other and where we can learn enough of patience, tolerance, honesty, humility and service to subdue our former masters, insecurity, resentments and unsatisfied dreams of power.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you the toast "Alcoholics Anonymous".

## CHAPTER 8

# Alcoholics Anonymous

Dr. Fraser McDonald, Superintendent, Carrington Hospital, Auckland

As all of those involved in the treatment of alcoholics realise, the main problem is not getting them off alcohol (any halfwit can do that and indeed every alcoholic has done it himself innumerable times). No, the main problem is to:

- (a) Keep them off alcohol for the rest of their life, and
- (b) stopping them from being the destructive psychopath.

This seems to be a remarkably tall order and indeed it has been the main reasons why, by and large, psychiatrists have washed their hands of the treatment of alcoholism using various excuses or cop-outs, such as, "the patient doesn't want treatment" or "he's a psychopath" or "he is incurable". These excuses must be firmly resisted and must be recognised for what they are and this surely must be the only disease where the patient is asked to get rid of all of his symptoms before he is acceptable for treatment. What we need for the therapeutic process is:

- (a) A complete change in his value system or his moral system if you like in order to try and turn him from a taker into a giver, from a greedy self-lover to a generous other-lover. By this I don't only mean the sexual aspect of love but applies very much to the sexual aspects of his life. I think most of us are agreed that the rather simple-minded Freudian theory that homosexuality was at the basis of alcoholism is now not held by anybody, but their sexuality is certainly extremely disturbed in that they appear to be no homosexual or properly heterosexual but more asexual or more accurately what the Professor of Moral Theology I think it was at Rome said to a young priest in training that what he hoped to do with the priest who was training was to turn them into something that was not hetero not homo but monosexual.
- (b) He has to get his emotions unfrozen. One of the characteristic things about alcoholics in treatment is that one sees that their emotional life appears to have been put into the deep freeze, or if you like, pickled in alcohol at the time they started their heavy drinking so that one is presented with a patient aged perhaps 45 but with the emotional life of a 17 year old. It is quite obvious that they have stopped growing at the time alcohol acted as an anaesthetic to the usual growth processes in emotional life in that alcohol anaesthetised all the pain and anxiety which are usually the preludes to us forming new solutions to new problems. What we had to do is provide them with a speedy growing up process to enable them to do the adult things such as:



- (i) to learn to trust themselves and others.
- (ii) to postpone the satisfaction of immediate desires in favour of later satisfactions, i.e., time-binding.
- (iii) to be able to bear guilt and emotional pain with some equanimity.
- (iv) to bear the fact that they have *imperfections* as against the terrible destructive perfectionism which has plagued their unsatisfied lives up until now.
- (v) to bear to let others take the centre stage at times.
- (vi) to become a nurturer rather than a clamourer for nurture, i.e., a parent rather than a baby.
- (vii) to become responsible for their actions without blaming others for their failures or inability to reach the unrealistic goals they have had for themselves in the past.
- (viii) to deal with reality rather than the fantasies of their guilty past or glorious future, both delusional to a marked degree during their drinking days.
- (c) This process must be understandable to men who are frequently brain damaged and often with imperfect education — it must be in simple terms with no psychiatric jargon. This could well apply to psychiatric textbooks incidentally. As I said before this seems to be a very tall order but amazingly enough AA seems to be able to deliver it. I would like to now touch on some of the healing psychological mechanism present in the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Step 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.**

This is a very powerful psychological mechanism — note the “we” not the “you” or “I”. This attacks especially the terrifying psychopathic certainty and arrogance of the active alcoholic, the tremendous self-love and that dreadful feeling of being solely responsible for themselves and yet hating their responsibility and wanting to abdicate it all the time with alcoholic oblivion. Also the terrifying loneliness almost akin to the God-like loneliness caused by the appalling drive of their super-ego which makes them identify with those wildly unrealistic ideals which are really making them identify with God himself, a state in which nothing can be more destructive. It aims to attack their terrible feelings of wanting to be powerful and competent which is never satisfied. What this Step does for them is to release them from that terrible burden and it is very necessary that they surrender completely and abrogate responsibility

for themselves in a rather delicate mechanism which enables them to think “I am now responsible (but not solely) for my life and I am not responsible for my alcoholism”. This is a state of mind which is quite necessary for any sort of recovery from alcoholism and this Step therefore is a most important one. This is the first Step in the absolutely right-angled change of life style which they must adopt, akin to what Jung speaks of as the massive emotional shift in the direction of their whole life.

**Step 2 Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

This is most important for the putting the responsibility for the change in life on to something outside of themselves and also forcing them to swallow the unpleasant truth that in fact as far as alcohol is concerned they are quite insane. The massive change in psychological emphasis of having to believe in something non-rational and something beyond their own competence is a cruelly necessary step to humble them sufficiently to enable them to rejoin the human race, imperfect as it is.

**Step 3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.**

This perhaps is more difficult for the doctors who are treating alcoholics to swallow than for the alcoholic himself as most people in the therapeutic field have been trained in basically materialist sense which has been the basis of “science” and scientific training which, while impeccable on scientific grounds, uncomfortably leaves a large chunk of the reality of every patient’s psychic life completely untouched by any sort of medical thinking. As a result doctors tend to be extremely embarrassed about talking about their patients religious beliefs and try to avoid it as it brings up uneasing feelings in them of the remnants of their childhood faith which is often shot through with overly simple-minded views about God, hypocritical memories of religious cant and so on. However, with the alcoholic it is very necessary that he actively decides to turn his will and his life over to some power other than himself.

**Step 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

Here of course the benefits are fairly obvious:

- (a) the necessity for complete honesty, frequently a dazzling new experience for the alcoholic, and
- (b) their ability to face up to the reality of who they actually are, rather than who they fantasize themselves to be.

**Step 5 Admitted to God, ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

Here the mechanisms are:

- (a) that in some way the saying out aloud about one's faults makes them very much more real, a real fact of life, rather than an idea in their minds. This is very therapeutic.
- (b) This is the start of Erikson's Basic Trust on which he lays so much emphasis and is of course the rock bottom foundation for any mental health.

One of the significant things about alcoholics is that they have never had, or have lost this basis trust in themselves and other people. Here, they are forced to trust another human being, maybe for the first time for many years. They have to make themselves vulnerable to another human being, something of which they have been absolutely terrified and have put on the front of invulnerability, even God-like invulnerability.

- (c) Here they are likely to be astonished that they find that at least one person seems to like them despite their exposure of their vulnerability and doesn't kick them when they are down and indeed seems to like them even though they have exposed themselves so frighteningly.
- (d) The necessity for the humility of being seen as an imperfect person instead of the mask of perfection that the alcoholics always presented to others and uneasily to themselves while at the same time they hated who they were and loved the unreal ideal of themselves that was in fact non-existent, now must be dropped, i.e., this is the start of self-love and acceptance which is the basis of health, St. Francis' Brother Ass.

**Step 6 We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

Here they must be prepared to change and let the healthy forces in their psyche well up to give them new options and in the case of the alcoholic almost any change will be for the better as all their mechanisms of their emotional life have been very sick indeed. However, it is the ability to be open-minded and be ready for other ideas to well up which is important. There must be and often comes with this Step a willingness to believe that he doesn't have all the answers as in the past he thought he had to have and again that he needs to depend on something other than himself.

**Step 7 Humbly ask him to remove our shortcomings.**

Here we have a positive request to follow up Step 6 a healthy exercise opposed to the alcoholic mechanism of "promises, promises but no decisions" and as such commits them to positive and what is most important a different course of action as far as our emotional life is concerned.

**Step 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.**

Here of course the obvious advantages of a complete house cleaning of really going into all the nooks and crannies to clean out those devils which lurk in the other crevices of their mind and creep up on them when their guard is dropped to make them squirm in the middle of the night, here is a way they can banish these demons forever.

**Step 9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.**

Here again is the healthy and humbling exercise aimed at destroying the narcissistic grandiose perfectionist sick way of thinking in that they have to admit their faults publicly to another and not to be "number one" here in direct opposition to their past series of half-baked apologies, excuses, lies and paranoid blaming of their faults on others in order to avoid the consequences of their actions. Here is a full and complete acceptance of responsibility for their actions without self-pity or excuses or trying to cop-out.

**Step 10 Continue to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admit it.**

Here the repeated taking of the inventory is the necessary healthy psychological mechanism.

**Step 11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.**

Here we have a nutritious fantasy system instead of the sick and destructive old fantasies of revenge, jealousy, grandiosity, self-pity and so on. Here they are allowing themselves to be open to "the good" i.e., to any healthy and nourishing movements of the psyche.

**Step 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we try to carry this message as alcoholics to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

This perhaps is the most important in my mind for the continual rehabilitation of an alcoholic. Here we have personified all the virtues which the alcoholic must identify with if he is to stay sober — here he must be the giver not the taker and he must be giving of himself of his time. He must humble himself to repeat how he was led to Alcoholics Anonymous which revives all of the old harsh memories of his drinking days and reminds him of the completely different life style he is living now. It continues to identify him with the solution not the problem, to identify with the winners not the losers, and it fulfills the old Biblical promise. It is in giving that you shall receive.

So there we have what I think is the best ready-made kit for emotional and spiritual change and growth that I know of. The Foundation for Mental Health in New Zealand will probably be aiming heavily at educating the public in sort of first-aid kits for mental health and I can really think of nothing better than the above 12 steps in some form or other. Certainly I know of no alcoholic who has continued to have a stable and happy recovery who has not in one way or another applied all of those psychological principles to himself. It has had profound affects on my own psychiatric thinking in that it has made me change my mind completely about the whole category of character disorders, personality disorders and especially about the rag-bag we call the "psychopath". I now believe that most of the stuff written in the textbooks about this is a load of rubbish and I see it now more as a reaction to a person's alcoholism rather than a cause and therefore curable by removing the cause. Certainly it is a way of involving every aspect of a sick person's psyche, whereas here the religious aspect is firmly grasped and the psychological mechanisms are remarkably sound.

As a result it is for I think any doctor a humbling and ennobling experience to be honoured to stand by and watch sometimes awestruck at that heroic and ever fascinating miracle, embodied in those most famous of medical quotations "I treated them, God cured them."

We do not really have enough time to deal with the organisational structure of Alcoholics Anonymous and this really should form the basis of another paper in itself. The highly advanced technique of man-management embodied in their organisational structure which is a potent amalgam of theocracy, dictatorship, democracy and anarchy in which each alcoholic feels a real part of the organisation has to me astonishing similarities to what I am sure the theologians of the Christian Church were fumbling towards when they spoke about people being a "part of the body of Christ." I feel that AA has succeeded where the Christian Church has by and large failed.

Again the techniques of the AA meeting deserves a paper in itself with the very powerful therapeutic or perhaps maintenance affect of:

- (a) peer approval
- (b) group pressure
- (c) public confession
- (d) submission to the group conscience.

All these are of course very powerful forces, perhaps the most potent forces known to man to maintain political cohesiveness and we see remarkable similarities in the political and social organisation of the great People's Republic of China.

Surely is is a very remarkable organisation and indeed it is unique with many lessons to teach us in the widest spheres of politics, education and organisation in our cruel and chaotic people-eating society.

I hope we learn these lessons before it is too late.

Paper presented to the

1977 Summer School of Alcohol Studies — Massey University  
February 3rd 1977

Organised by the

NATIONAL SOCIETY ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG DEPENDENCE N.Z. INC

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## CHAPTER 9

### Al-Anon Family Groups in New Zealand.

Al-Anon in New Zealand came into being in the same way and for the same reasons as it did in America.

In the beginning wives went along to AA meetings with their husbands. These were usually held in private homes and whilst the AA's were having their meeting in a separate room, the wives met together, no doubt in the kitchen preparing supper, and very likely discussing their difficulties. It was quite an event for these women, who had avoided meeting people for so long and who had never been able to talk about alcohol and its resulting problems. Here were people with the same problems who understood the frustration and loneliness . . . In spite of the fact that their partners had found sobriety in AA difficult situations still existed in the home and with the family. They began to see that they needed a deeper understanding of alcoholism, what it had done to their partners and, what is more, what it had done to them and their families, the non alcoholics. They wondered if they, too, could find some help with the programme which had helped their husbands to achieve sobriety. The results of working together in groups had proved helpful to the AA's and so the wives started to have their own groups. The wives groups proved to be most beneficial. Without knowing it, they were laying the foundations of Al-Anon Family Groups. The first N.Z. 'Wives Group' started in Dunedin in 1948 in a private home; other groups started up and, in 1954, these became Al-Anon Family Groups.

In 1955 Heather wrote to Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters Inc. in New York and purchased their newly published book 'Al-Anon Family Groups' and also some pamphlets and booklets. At that time it was not possible to import literature into N.Z. without a licence and it was extremely difficult to get one, so Heather asked and obtained permission from N.Y. to reprint any of the literature she already had. Al-Anon H.Q. N.Y. also, very generously, sent every new Al-Anon Group starting in N.Z. a complimentary copy of their book and also an assortment of pamphlets, enough to get a new group off the ground. Heather, with the generous help of Don M. (AA) of Palmerston North had the book *Al-Anon Family Groups* reprinted, omitting only the personal stories, and put into paperback form which was sold for 2/-. Copies were also made from the other literature and pamphlets were sold for 3d and 6d which was certainly within the reach of most budgets. How did Al-Anon manage to finance this? Heather used to say "God is our Banker" and indeed he was. A friend gave Heather a sum of money which was held in credit for Al-Anon in New York, so when a license was finally obtained, with the invaluable help of Snow (AA) Al-Anon could order literature and pay later. If the finance permit was withdrawn Al-Anon would still be able to ob-

## *Al-Anon Family Groups*

tain literature. Al-Anon desperately needed these guidelines as new groups were starting up all over the country.

In their travels all round N.Z. Ian and Heather met many wives, husbands and relatives of alcoholics. Heather kept up a regular correspondence with them, thus keeping the fellowship together. Alcoholics are notorious for the so called 'geographical' cure and naturally families moved to all parts of N.Z. This was a devastating experience for some of the wives, many of whom were living in very isolated districts, often miles from their nearest neighbour. Heather corresponded regularly with them all and was often able to put them in touch with others in similar situations. This correspondence was a life-saver, but it grew to such proportions that Heather decided to send out a regular newsletter.

These were the 'Loners' and Heather suggested that it might help them to feel a real part of the fellowship if there was a 'Loners' project, such as the Al-Anon Annual Magazine. This challenge was taken up and the first editor lived on a fairly isolated farm in Hunterville. Others who did a term of editing the magazine were from a farm outside Dannevirke and then down to Otago. It finally went to a city group in Auckland. Unfortunately this is now discontinued. This project put the editors in touch with people all over the world. Articles were contributed from Doctors, ministers of religion, Institutes doing Alcoholic research in U.S.A. and Canada and England, and many other contacts. This was like living in a new world and it certainly enlarged the horizons of all the editors. At the beginning, Heather undertook the responsibility of getting the magazine printed and collated into paperback form and distributed. AA came to our aid again in the person of Sue of Wellington who did all the typing and lay-out.

It was a truly professional job. Al-Anon acknowledges with gratitude the valuable assistance so gladly given by many members of AA to help get Al-Anon on the map. Heather, our first lady in Al-Anon, personally started every service now being rendered in N.Z. and then handed each over as it became a workable unit, or advantageous to launch further. In our New Zealand two island structure, with many 'Loners' and many small groups in comparative isolation, it became obvious that about 70% of them would never meet with other groups, or indeed in some cases, with another member of Al-Anon from another part of the country. It was important that Al-Anon should become a national organisation and that members should be enabled to meet together with a sense of belonging. It was desirable that groups should function in unity and should explore together the tremendous value of the AA 12 Step programme which became the basis of the Al-Anon programme and also the Twelve Traditions of Al-Anon which were set out from the vast experience of the Al-Anon Groups in America as a guide for unity in Al-Anon.

In November 1958 Al-Anon in N.Z. became a national organisation, to be known as The N.Z. Al-Anon Family Groups. A Conference was held, first, in the South Island at Oamaru. In February 1959 a Conference was held in the



## *Al-Anon Family Groups*

North Island at Palmerston North. The unity of purpose and tremendous boost to morale experienced as a result of these two gatherings made it abundantly clear that there was a need to organise an annual Conference for the duration of a weekend, in the North and South Islands alternately.

Meanwhile more Al-Anon groups were starting to form over all N.Z. In some of the main centres, Al-Anon groups were very active e.g. making broadcasts for Al-Anon at their local stations, arranging public meetings, responding to invitations to supply speakers to various organisations and schools. The Al-Anon message was being carried enthusiastically. A meeting was organised in Auckland to organise the servicing of these groups. The guidelines suggested for every type of Al-Anon service had been carefully compiled and set out in book form by Al-Anon Family Groups H.Q. in N.Y. Their experience, as recorded, was of great value to Al-Anon groups in N.Z. Now it was necessary to organise a National Service Committee to import the right kind of literature. A National Secretary/Treasurer was elected to co-ordinate all services, deal with inquiries, general correspondence, acknowledge all moneys, make yearly directories, take minutes of conference, send out reports, agendas, notices etc. As Al-Anon grew this was a very responsible position. Other positions were: a Literature Officer and team — to import and distribute literature. A Magazine Editor — Heather undertook to arrange the printing and distribution at the beginning. A Newsletter and team — to produce a monthly newsletter and distribute it. These services were organised with the understanding that those appointed would co-opt helpers from their own areas. With the entire population of New Zealand at three million, as compared with many million in other countries, it was understandable that Al-Anon in New Zealand could not, at this time, finance a National service office, so a band of devoted members operated the various services from their own homes in various parts of the country, literally from one end to the other. It is to their credit that the whole operation ran so smoothly. Considerable demands were made on all these services.

A Conference Sub-Committee was elected to plan and be responsible for the entire arrangements of Conference. This was the highlight of the year and Heather, Phyl and her AA husband Snow undertook this tremendous task.

Al-Anon arranged to have a meeting of their National Committee at 'Arahina' the Girl Guide Association Headquarters at Marton in October 1959. It coincided with the bi-annual AA meeting. AA asked Al-Anon if they would share the accommodation of Arahina with them as there was no other weekend available for them. There was plenty of room and nothing could be more appealing than to share the weekend. Al-Anon undertook to make all the arrangements such as accommodation, meeting rooms, recreation rooms, catering etc. The weekend was a great success with a combined Open meeting on the Saturday evening and again on the Sunday morning. From that time on, AA and Al-Anon joined with their Conference and bi-annual

## *Al-Anon Family Groups*

gatherings. It also presented an opportunity for AA's to bring their wives and families with them.

Al-Anon offered to be responsible for the running of these weekends. It was necessary for an advance team to go into residency on the Tuesday before the weekend to ensure the smooth running. When Conference was held at Massey and Lincoln Universities there was much work for the Conference sub-committee to do. Booking forms had to be sent out, arrangements made for travel concessions, receipts and programmes sent out, accommodation arranged, meeting rooms, recreation rooms and most difficult of all — catering. People arriving on different days, at different times, leaving earlier — local people coming in for the Saturday evening meal. Often people arrived from great distances without having booked at all, provision had to be made for these and some very tactful negotiations had to be made with the chef. However, Heather, Phyl and Snow were always at the reception desk with a smile and a welcome. Conference organisation was a labour of love. An overseas visitor was once told by an AA member (through lack of knowledge) that no organised preparation was put into Conference.

Basic principles were accepted by AA and Al-Anon. Joint Open Meetings were chaired alternately by AA and Al-Anon and each were allotted the same number of speakers.

In 1964 AA met together to consider unity at national level and this was their special Conference. The Mayor of Palmerston was invited by AA to chair the Open Meeting. Conference became quite a large affair and AA and Al-Anon members from the Conference venue were asked to act as hosts. This was necessary at Lincoln and Massey Universities, where visitors needed to be escorted to their rooms. Al-Anon also provided the supper for the Saturday open meeting. They also opened an enquiry desk — and where possible transport to and from ferry/train/airport. To quote from a letter recently written by one Al-Anon member. "My first National Gathering (now called Convention) was at Lincoln College in February 1963. I will never forget the magic of that meeting, love, fellowship, caring and sharing, everyone housed in the boarding building, meals together, talking till the wee small hours; the whole atmosphere was one of love."

More men were joining Al-Anon and at first they felt a little ill at ease with the predominately female membership. However, Convention brought them into contact with other men with similar problems and it was tremendously helpful for them to be able to share their experiences, understanding and hope. Al-Anon had simple beginnings.

There would be no doubt about the importance of the dedication put into the fellowship by Heather in holding it all together. She and Ian made many personal contacts during their trips round New Zealand. There would have been many lonely people had she not kept up a regular correspondence with them all, and later, of course her newsletter. Heather pursued the idea of a National fellowship to unite all these people. Unity was Al-Anon's greatest strength. Al-Anon salutes you Heather.

## *Al-Anon Family Groups*

Two unforgettable members were Phyl and Snow. Snow was one of the early members of AA and of course Phyl was an early al-Anon member. They died and certainly left their mark — their particular service was Convention, early members will remember them filling all sorts of roles, they were at every gathering.



**The AA Rooms — 175 Vivian St Wellington**

## CHAPTER 10

# AA and NSA

## Roy Johnston

As AA was establishing in America and going through the travail of its tentative traditions and organization some of those who came into the fellowship saw that there not only could be alternative pathways of the primary purpose if "reaching the still suffering alcoholic" was to be achieved but some may have to be followed.

One of these incomers was Marty Mann who from her considerable business experience saw that while AA should adhere to its imposed traditions, it would be of assistance to it in achieving its primary goal if a parallel public organization could complement its activity.

So Marty Mann set out to catalyse the formation of the National Council of Alcoholism (NCA of America). It was not long after NCA was launched in the USA and as Ian was getting his letters of initiation to AA from Bobbie, his subsequent visit from Lillian Roth and her husband Burt, and as he grappled with the same organizational dilemmas as Bill W. had so graphically outlined to Ian personally, that Ian first gleaned some knowledge of NCA in America.

Thus when Ian had been called on by Professor Jock Caughey of Otago Medical School Faculty of Medicine for some insights to AA and some assistance from it, Prof. Caughey had asked Ian what they might do to help. Ian with knowledge of the US NCA explained that NCA in America had been set up to do the things AA could not do because of its traditions — namely politick, raise money, publicise and get understanding of the disease concept.

Ian therefore enjoined Prof. Caughey to get a local NSA into being. This followed some exchanges with NCA and an attempt to get Marty Mann out to New Zealand — her visit did not materialize until February 1961 (by which time Queen Mary Hospital, Hanmer Springs, was into alcoholism).

It was during 1953-54 that the basis for NSA (National Society on Alcoholism) was carefully put together in Dunedin under the careful guidance and initiatives of Dr. Jock Caughey, then Professor of Medicine at Otago University.

This founding group comprised Ian along with some local Dunedin members of AA and Dean Walter Hurst, Sir John Walsh, Father Pound, Scott Gilkison and others.

By 1954 the National Society on Alcoholism was established on its Dunedin base and with surprising speed it spread out rapidly, clearly assisted in its extensions by AA members acting in keeping with the advice William G. had tendered Ian in the prized "charter letter" of November 15, 1950.

## AA and NSA

While it is difficult to subdivide areas of influence, and no one wants to because most of us are only quite selflessly interested in getting out the message, it is from this point with the public platform afforded by NSA that the main powerful stream of influence of AA in New Zealand on the ultimate recognition of alcoholism as a disease and the awakening of some conscience within the health industry was initiated.

Alf J. in Auckland, Lindsay Mc., Allan G. in Wellington, AA's in Central Otago, Southland, Nelson, Christchurch, Hamilton, all got very much in behind the early NSA movement and branches mushroomed widely. In all cases they worked alongside lay people in the community and much bridging work was done.

It was not until 1956, the 28th May 1956 in Dunedin, that all the procedures for formal incorporation which had taken just on two years were completed. The instrument of incorporation is unique in both AA and NSAD history. It was formally applied for on the 13th September 1955, and the signatories were:

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Witness</b>
J.E. Caughey Medical School Dunedin	Ian McEwan Salesman, Eatwell Ave., Paraparaumu.
A.M. Douglas Medical School Dunedin	Ian McEwan
V.F. McInnes Social Welfare Worker, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
Vera Hayward Teacher, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
Richard Seddon University Lecturer, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
Wallace Ironside Psychiatrist, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
J.N. Pound Clergyman, Mosgiel	Ian McEwan
J.P. Walsh Dean, Dental School, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
John Warrington Magistrate, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
A. Hartley Insurance Manager, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
Ena Hartley Housewife, Dunedin	Ian McEwan
Steve Sinclair Knox Church, Dunedin	Caroline Sinclair Housewife, Dunedin

## AA and NSA

Scott Gilkison  
Accountant, Dunedin  
Jean Cantrell  
Housewife, Dunedin  
Leslie Davidson  
Chicks Hotel, Port Chalmers

H. Nisbet  
Clerk, Dunedin  
P. Gavigan  
Hairdress, Dunedin  
H.W. Shove  
Teacher, Dunedin

In those earlier years much was gained from the close interworking between AA and NSAD. It was not until the later arrival and influence of some few very depressing forest lawyers that some separateness of identity began.

What is of extreme importance in this chapter of the history is not to record a dull litany of dates and places, or even of pigeons brought to serenity, but to put down for all AA's to understand the profound influence AA was able to exercise through NSAD in the New Zealand scene.

An objective culling out of all factors of influence shows without any doubt that the main seminal stream of influence towards something practical about Alcoholism in New Zealand was Alcoholics Anonymous done first by its example and its record, and by the action medium of some of its individual members. These members did not breach traditions. They espoused the cause as special service in their private capacities.

We have already recorded individual AA's influence in the founding of NSA. Let me quote from the memoirs of Sir John Marshall Vol. 1., 1912-1960, p 237-238:

"But new ideas were beginning to emerge. The concept of alcoholism as a disease to be treated rather than a crime to be punished, was gaining some credence. The newly formed National Society on Alcoholism took up the crusade.

In August 1956 I convened and chaired the first official conference on the care of alcoholics. The conference met for two days — in the Court of Arbitration, of all places! It was attended by representatives of the National Society on Alcoholism, the Salvation Army, the police, the Department of Health and Justice, and the Senior Magistrate (Mr L.G.H. Sinclair). I have before me the press statement which I issued on 7 August 1956, setting out the recommendations of the conference.

The basic conclusion of the conference was that alcoholism was a disease which required treatment, preferably voluntary treatment, although legal sanctions might still be required in some cases. It was recommended that hospital boards should make provision for such treatment. An education programme on alcoholism and its treatment was to be promoted for doctors and nurses by the Health Department, and for the public, industry, trade unions, and other special groups, by the National Society on Alcoholism, who also undertook to provide staff training for police, prison, and probation officers. The need for research was referred to the Medical Research Council. Amendments to the law were suggested and, perhaps most important of all, a co-

ordinating committee was set up to see that the recommendations were carried out. In the light of subsequent developments and present practices, this conference could well be regarded as the seed-bed from which has grown the new attitudes and policies which now prevail."

This "seed-bed" which Sir John refers to was to get further fertilizing from the recovered alcoholic sector. It was a member of AA who pushed and bullied a reluctant Director General of Health and a Government Caucus to adopt the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Act which when finally implemented provided an impetus to alcoholism treatment beds in some few hospitals.

They were members of AA who triggered the visit of Father Joe Martin whose public meetings throughout New Zealand, sponsored by Fletcher Challenge and organised by NSAD, had much useful influence on local MPs of both parties.

It was members of AA working through NSAD who opposed the liquor industry on the ALAC concept, propounded it to the Coates Royal Commission and waited in frustration for the 1972-75 Government to implement the Commission's recommendations.

And it was a member of AA who put forward and presented to the National Caucus the 1975 National policy platform on dependency which resulted in the ALAC establishment by Statute in 1976.

These positive developments out of this powerful seminal stream need to be understood by all in AA, both for the good the individual AA's have achieved but also for what was done in partnership with NSAD.

That is the real history of the AA/NSAD complementary action. This will continue for NSAD is based in the expertise of recovery not in the addiction-naivety of the welfare health professional. We know that "only you can do it yourself but you cannot do it alone."

# AA: the twelve steps

- 1** We admitted we were powerless over alcohol . . . that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- 4** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

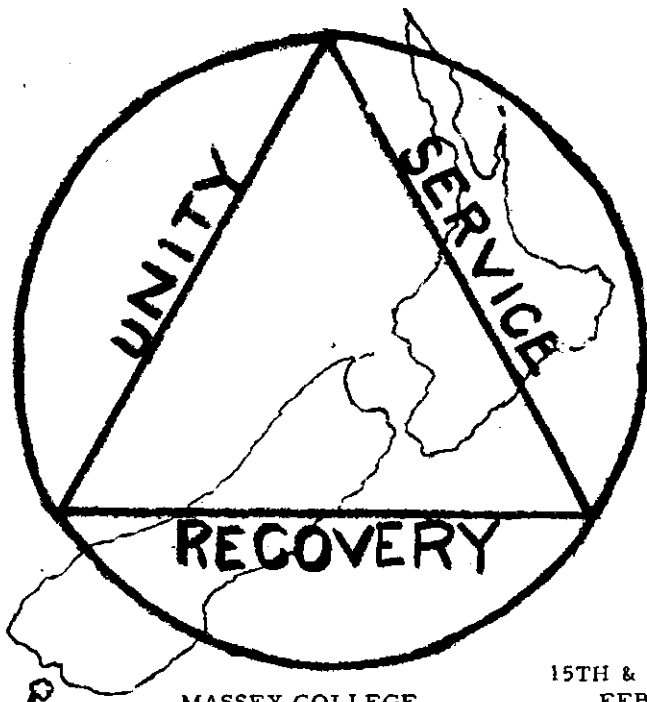


# AA: the twelve traditions

- 1** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
- 2** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority . . . a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants . . . they do not govern.
- 3** The only requirements for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
- 4** Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
- 5** Each group has but one primary purpose . . . to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- 6** An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7** Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8** Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
- 9** AA, as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10** Alcoholic Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11** Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
- 12** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

PROGRAM

FIRST NEW ZEALAND  
CONFERENCE  
OF  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



MASSEY COLLEGE  
PALMERSTON NORTH

15TH & 16TH  
FEB.  
1964

## Appendix 1a

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS SERVICE COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND  
INVITES YOU TO  
THE FIRST NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
MASSEY COLLEGE, PALMERSTON NORTH, 14-15-16 February 1964**

The main purpose of this Conference is to consider the need for General Service for A.A. in New Zealand on a National basis and to hear a report from the Steering Committee of the Council on what has been done since the Council was formed in 1961 and to approve or alter its constitution and objects as the membership may consider necessary.

### OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME

#### FRIDAY 14 FEBRUARY 1964

~~Registration and allocation of rooms.~~

#### SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1964

9.30 a.m. Gathering of all A.A.'s. Welcome by the Chairman and Mayor of Palmerston North.

Closed meeting of A.A.

2 p.m. Presentation of the Scheme for General Service  
"The Need - The Method - The Proposed Action"

8 p.m. Public Meeting in the Assembly Hall.

#### SUNDAY 16 FEBRUARY 1964

10 a.m. THE DECISION MEETING

The membership will be invited to accept responsibility for the future welfare of A.A. in New Zealand through a New Zealand General Service Conference of A.A. If the answer is "We Will" then plans for its constitution and procedures for functioning would be approved in detail.

2 p.m. OPEN MEETING

Full details of the programme will be available later, and will appear in "Mainstay" and "Outlook", and be sent to all groups.

Full Board is available at Massey College from Friday night to Monday morning at a charge of 35/- a day (part days at unit charges).

Concession rates (10%) will be arranged on planes and trains.

Come share your "strength, hope and experience" with us by sending your application to the Secretary, Box 6458, Wellington.

~~Secretary~~  
\*The Secretary,  
Box 6458,  
WELLINGTON.

Please book accommodation for me for the 1964 Conference as indicated below:-

#### FRIDAY

#### SATURDAY

#### SUNDAY

#### MONDAY

Breakfast

Breakfast

Breakfast

Lunch

Lunch

Dinner

Dinner

Bed

Bed

Bed

Is your wife or family coming? Number.....

Have they applied to Al-Anon? Yes No

NAME.....

Home Phone No.....

Address .....

Expect to arrive by ..... at .....(time)

## Appendix 1b

SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1964.

7-45 a.m. BREAKFAST  
9-30 a.m. OPENING OF CONFERENCE BY HIS WORSHIP  
THE MAYOR  
CHAIRMAN : SEL.C.(AUCKLAND)  
10 a.m. MORNING TEA  
10-45/ Noon CLOSED MEETING OF A.A.  
Chairman Don McL(Palmerston North )  
12-15 p.m. LUNCH  
1-15/2-45 p.m. PRESENTATION OF THE SCHEME FOR GENERAL  
SERVICE  
Chairman ; Sel.C.(Auckland)  
(Chairman of Steering Committee )  
3 p.m. AFTERNOON TEA  
3-45/5 p.m. PRESENTATION OF THE SCHEME FOR GENERAL SERVICE  
(CONTINUED )

NOTE : In the event of this meeting being completed ahead  
of schedule there will be alternative subjects for  
discussion

CHAIRMAN : BILL C (BLENHEIM)

5-15 p.m. DINNER  
8 P.M. COMBINED PUBLIC MEETING

Sel.C welcomes the Mayor and Mayoress and outlines the  
purpose of the meeting before handing over to the Mayor  
who speaks ; followed by ; an A.A. man ; an A.A. woman ;  
an Al-Anon member ; an Alateen member ; Dr.G.Wall (Guest  
Speaker ) ; and Dick O'D.

SUPPER

PUT YOUR WRITTEN QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY PHASE OF A.A.  
AL-ANON OR ALATEEN ACTIVITY IN THE "ASK-IT BASKET  
IN THE MAIN CONFERENCE HALL :ANSWERS SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

## Appendix 1b

SUNDAY 16 FEBRUARY 1964.

7 a.m. CHURCH SERVICES

7-45 a.m. BREAKFAST

8-45/9-45 DECISION MEETING

This is the meeting at which the membership accepts or rejects the responsibility for General Service. If it is accepted plans will be put forward for Conference representation and functioning.

In the event of a decision being reached on Saturday a discussion will be held on "The Twelve Traditions"

Chairman ; Ian M. (Wellington )

10 a.m. MORNING TEA

10-45/noon DECISION MEETING (Continued-if necessary ).

OR

DISCUSSION ON SUBJECTS SUBMITTED TO THE MEETING

Chairman Snow C (Gisborne).

12-13 a.m. DINNER

1-30 / 2-45 COMBINED OPEN MEETING

CHAIRMEN

A.A. ; Buck (Tauranga) ; AL-ANON Dolly W. (Gisborne)

ALATEEN : Roger C (Woodville)

3 p.m. AFTERNOON TEA

3-45 / 5 p.m. COMBINED OPEN MEETING

"ASK-IT BASKET

Your questions about any phase of the activities of A.A. ; Al-Anon or Alateen answered. Questions may be placed in the basket in the main conference hall.

CHAIRMAN ; Eric H (Timaru )

A panel from A.A. ; Al-Anon and Alateen

5-15 DINNER

8 p.m. AN EVENING OF FILMS IN THE LECTURE HALL

IN THE CHAIR : HEATHER AND IAN

## **Appendix 2.**

### **New Zealand Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Box 6458, Wellington**

Resolutions passed by the first N.Z. Conference of AA

1. Proposed by Dick O'D (Hawera) Seconded by Bob L. (Te Kuiti) THAT this assembly of AA representing the membership of AA in New Zealand HEREBY RESOLVES THAT a New Zealand Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous be formed consisting of delegates from the Area Assemblies and the Auckland Service Centre and unaffiliated groups.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. Proposed by Graham M. (Wanganui) Seconded by Snow C. (Gisborne) THAT the N.Z. Service Conference of AA consist of 3 delegates from each Area Assembly. Until the creation of the Northern Area Assembly the Auckland Service Centre be asked to send 3 delegates; and further that any extra delegates be appointed by the N.Z. Assembly from time to time.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Proposed by Peter G. (Wn.) Seconded by Terry N. (Wn.) THAT this assembly now appoint one extra delegate to the N.Z. Service Council of AA

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Proposed by Ian M. (Wn.) Seconded by Audrey T. (Wn.) THAT Joan McC (Taihape) be appointed delegate to the Service Conference representing unaffiliated groups and "loners".

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Proposed by Buck B. (Tauranga) Seconded by Don McL. (Palmerston North) THAT the present steering committee remain in office until the first meeting of the NZ Service Conference of AA.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. Proposed by David M. (Wn.) Seconded by Graham M. (Wanganui) THAT the Steering Committee consist of a Chairman; Vice-Chairman; Secretary; and one other.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. Proposed by Bill L-S (Ch.) Seconded by Buck B. (Tauranga) THAT the N.Z. Service Conference of AA appoint a steering committee from its own members.

CARRIED ON VOICES

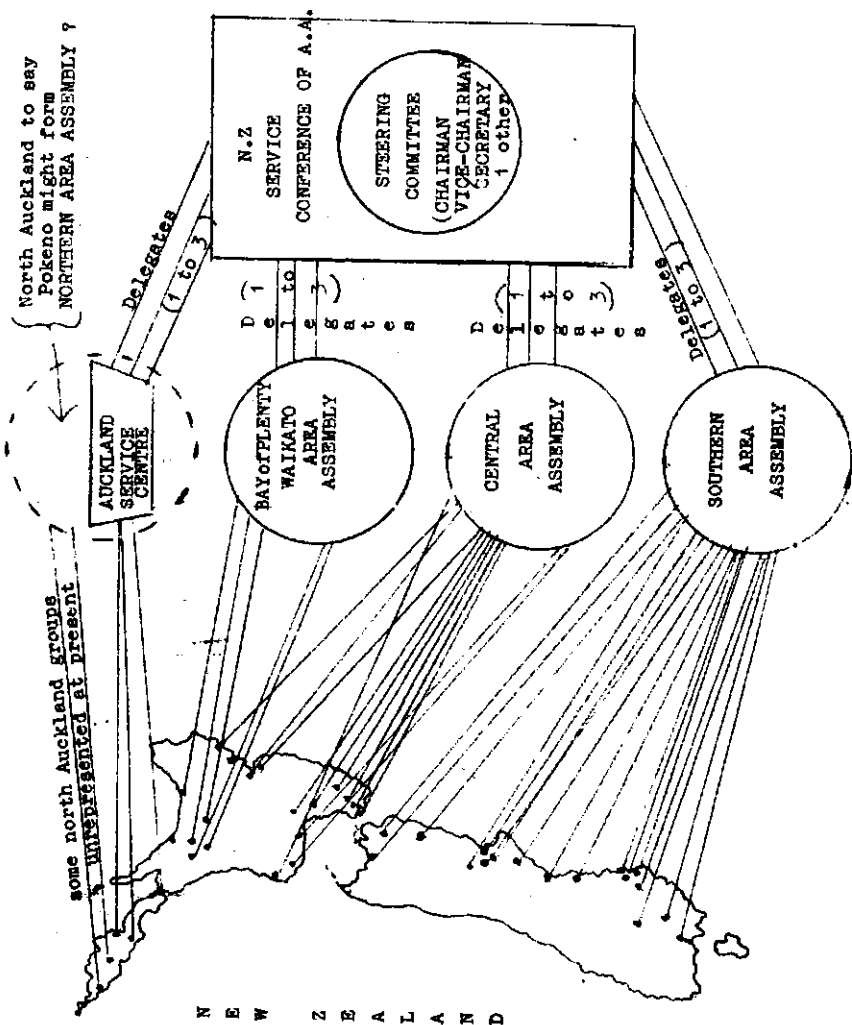
## *Appendix 2*

These resolutions set the way for the operation of a representative Service Conference as shown in the diagram presented to the membership at the Conference and distributed freely among the membership. Copies of these resolutions and the diagram are available from the Secretary. The diagram of the proposals with explanatory notes was also included in the January 1964 issue of "Mainstay".

The present Steering Committee is Sel C. (Auckland) Chairman; Dick O'D (Hawera) and Ian M (Wellington) Secretary.

The next Assembly of AA will be at Lincoln College, Chirstchurch, February 1965.

EXISTING PLAN OF OVERALL SERVICES (SUBMITTED FOR CONFIRMATION).





## **Appendix 4.**

### **AA Publications That Aid Cooperation**

#### *Books:*

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS  
AA COMES OF AGE

#### *Pamphlets:*

THE AA GROUP  
THE AA MEMBER  
AA TRADITION — HOW IT DEVELOPED  
THE AA SERVICE MANUAL  
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED  
AA AND THE ALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEE  
A CLERGYMAN ASKS ABOUT ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
AA IN PRISONS  
AA IN HOSPITALS  
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL . . . AA WANTS TO WORK WITH YOU  
AA IN YOUR COMMUNITY  
SPEAKING AT NON-AA MEETINGS  
A MEMBER'S-EYE VIEW OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
A BRIEF GUIDE TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
LET'S BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS

#### *Guidelines:*

ARMED SERVICES  
CENTRAL OR INTERGROUP OFFICES  
CLUBS  
CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS, AND AREA OR REGIONAL AA  
GET-TOGETHERS  
COOPERATING WITH COURT, ASAP (ALCOHOL SAFETY ACTION  
PROJECT), AND SIMILAR PROGRAMS  
INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEES  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AA AND AL-ANON  
ON OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS  
CURRENT USE OF THE AA DIRECTORIES  
PUBLIC INFORMATION  
FOR AA MEMBERS EMPLOYED IN THE ALCOHOLISM FIELD

#### ***Appendix 4***

### **FORMING LOCAL COMMITTEES ON COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY AA ANSWERING SERVICES**

*Monthly Magazine: THE AA GRAPEVINE*

*Address: P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10017*

*Newsletter: ABOUT AA*

## SERVICE

I have had a lot of requests for an article on service. One of the best discussions on service that I have heard took place in New Zealand in 1966. Eve M. of New York was visiting us and was interviewed by a number of members. The interview was taped. The following is taken word for word from the tape. I hope that you enjoy it.

Present were: Eve M, Ian McE, Ivan T, Neil P, Ron B, and Bill L-S.

IRVAN: I thought if you could tell us how in the States you work your Services, how the responsibility is accepted by individuals — in groups, in areas and so on. It seems to me that the individual responsibility is something that is accepted in the States more so than here in New Zealand, particularly financially.

EVE: I'm delighted to answer any questions that you have Ivan, or any of the others here, on this whole question of Service, but I do want to make very clear right at the beginning that my only purpose is to try and share the experience that has been gained, not only in the United States, but in other places as AA has developed. And in no way feel that I am trying to tell any of you how or what your affairs should be run, because that's one of the wonderful things about AA, and that is the fact that every area does run things pretty much in the way in which it is going to best serve the area. Nonetheless, there have been certain guides which have been established which appear to work, and of course that's the only reason that we do anything in AA — is because it works. If it didn't work for the alcoholic there wouldn't be any AA, and the same thing is true of services in general. So this is just a way in which I hope being here, I have an opportunity to share, but it is in no sense any idea of mine that I can pass along to you the way in which you people should do it. It has been wonderful to be here, and to see how well everybody is doing in AA in New Zealand.

But now to answer the last part of your question first about the financial responsibility — I think this is partly because we have been at it longer. We have been talking about money in AA in the United States for quite some time. I can remember at the St. Louis Convention in 1955, which is ten years ago, there was a whole panel on money in AA, and one of the people on that panel was Archibald Roosevelt, the Treasurer of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, and it became very clear that there is a need and a place for money in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous — not from the point of view of dues or fees for membership because any alcoholic can come to use and never do another thing financially if he doesn't want to — but the important thing is that as we become sober and become responsible we do begin to assume our share of responsibility for the support of AA. And I think that the "I am responsible" ceremony at Toronto in 1965 helped to point this out. There are many ways in which each of us can do twelfth-step work and help AA, but to be responsible that AA will always be there, really and truly, means financially responsible, that we will individually support whatever service entity is operating near us or for us, so that the message of AA can continue to be carried.

Now as far as inter-groups are concerned, initially these are started within an area when there are more groups than one, or when it becomes obvious that with several groups there needs to be a committee of some kind that can speak to people in the area who are interested in Alcoholics Anonymous. You can't ask the Press, you can't ask doctors and hospitals and nurses and people in industry and all these people to be blind in their contacts. They must have a point of contact that they can call and say, "What do you think about this as Alcoholic Anonymous?" or, "Can you co-operate with us on something in Alcoholics Anonymous?" So there is this need to have a focal point of information as a committee to answer this kind of question, and the inter-group naturally grew up wherever there were enough groups in an area to work together toward this kind of a committee, and very often this will just be a committee at the beginning and very often this committee arranges for groups to exchange.

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This is one thing I have noticed here, I think, in New Zealand (I may be quite wrong) and that is the fact that there doesn't seem to be too much exchanging of meetings back and forth. In the States you go to your group but you see members from another group, because they are the ones that are conducting the meeting, and you always have a different group every week coming in to conduct your meeting. So that this gives the people who are in attendance an opportunity to hear different people, see newer faces, get a different point of view. And then in return of course your group has to go back and see that group and it creates a kind of exchange which helps I think, to stimulate interest, especially for the older member who feels that he has "had it all and he's heard the same old story over and over again," and Old so-and-so is going to talk tonight and he always rambles through forty-five minutes; I'm going to be bored to death — I won't go' — and that kind of thing. So this exchange does help. Now as usual I have talked too long so I've forgotten the first part of your question.

IRVAN: Thank you Eve. I think you have covered it fairly well, but I had mentioned individual responsibility and group responsibility which brings me to another question which came to mind when you were speaking. I understand that you have levies in the States. Do your inter-groups or your area assemblies put a levy on groups and say, "Well we need so much for this and so much for that"? Could you advise us on that please.

EVE: I think we'd probably be thrown out if we used the term "levy", because everything in AA is done on a voluntary basis. But we rather encourage people to volunteer; shall we put it that way. We say that the yardstick for support of the General Service Office for example, the voluntary contributions are \$3 per member per year, and it is not a levy, it is voluntary, but groups when they feel that they want to be responsible in maintaining the support of the services, do go around and try and figure how many members they have and suggest that they need — so if supposing there were 20 members in the group — that they would need to have \$60 to send to the office before the year was out. That's because those contributions are listed in the General Service Directory. Now as far as individual contributions are concerned, individuals can make contributions in almost any area to either a central office, to an area assembly or to the General Service Office. But more usually this is done as a matter of group responsibility.

Individuals have in the past volunteered to make large donations, and it has long been our experience that it is better not to have people able to do it, give too much, because it gives them a vested interest in the Service — they can come and tell us what to do. And so we do have a ruling that no person can give more than \$100 per year to the General Service Office. But primarily the responsibility is that of the groups, so that groups are educated that they have certain places to make contributions to, and here in your area would be your area assemblies to try and get contributions for that, and for whatever central offices may be established.

IAN: Eve, I was just going to say (and Irvan correct me if I'm wrong), I feel that Irvan has in the back of his mind the question of, "How do we make groups take this responsibility or, can we work on them, educate them so that they do." Was that it, Irvan? . . . And both the individuals and groups — how can we encourage them to take more responsibility in this matter?

EVE: I think one way to do it is to keep talking about it. There is always this feeling that you musn't talk about money in AA and you know, the Secretary holds her head down when she's mentioning the basket up there on the table. You don't pass the hat here at your meetings. I don't think there is anything amiss with explaining to each that the responsibility lies in the group members. Now this is going to take time and there'll be some bowls probably; there will be some people who will say, "That isn't the way it was when I came in." You know, and so you just say, "Well AA is different from what it was when you came in. There aren't still only 40 members in New Zealand, we've got hundreds in New Zealand and therefore we have to take on more responsibilities, and that if you want AA the way it was when you came in, why you'll have to go

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back there and have only these few members again." Because actually a lot of these problems are the problems of AA's success and we have to be responsible enough to cope with success.

BILL: It seems to me, Eve, that the groups have to contribute to more than one body, in other words we have inter-groups here, area assembly and the New Zealand Service Conference, and I feel we should more often contribute to the New York office. Do you have any difficulty in the States, in explaining to the individuals that besides their supper and their rent they have all these other services to contribute to.

EVE: Yes. This is always a difficulty. There are so many different ways it is done in the States. The experience of lots of groups varies. There are some groups for example, that go around once a year to every member and say, "This is the time of the year when we have to make our contribution to the General Service Office so would you please give us your \$3." And they'll go round every member of the group for that \$3 and send it in. They may do the same thing as far as the area assembly which we call "committee" is concerned. They will say, "You know this is the time of year when the Committee or the Assembly is seeking its contributions" and they'll go to each individual member.

There are other groups that do it quite differently, and it's entirely up to a group how it meets its financial responsibilities. Other groups will talk about these things fairly often at their meetings in order to try and get a good collection, and let the money accrue in the Treasury, and then when the time comes just take it right off the top of the Treasury and send these contributions in, without even discussing it with the membership, because it's automatic that these things have to be done. Other groups have an automatic system, and they will announce that, "We're going to take 5% of every contribution of every meeting and send it to the General Service Office," or "We're going to take 10% and send it to the General Service Conference," or "We'll take 5% to send to the Area Assembly for the South Island," or, "We'll take 5% to send to the New Zealand Conference." A lot of you will do it that way, just taking it automatically out of each group's collection. But, there is always a collection at an AA meeting in the United States, because this keeps it in people's minds that we do have responsibilities.

And the other thing is I think that much can be done at meeting themselves. When it is explained that AA does have financial obligations. It isn't just the buying the tea and the crumpets which the Alanous mostly bring anyway. And it isn't the paying of a tiny rent that some church is letting us have for almost nothing because they are sorry for us; only we ought not to feel that this is our due. We ought to be glad to pay for rent and contributions for these things. So these things need to be kept emphasised at meetings — in a nice way, you know, I mean, you can always do things with a smile and let people learn.

IRVAN: Could you Eve perhaps give us some idea of the different types of collections you have.

EVE: By "different types" I don't know whether you mean the kind of things that we pass around, or whether you mean the amount, so I'll take both.

In the States we do have a plate or a dish of something or a wicker basket that gets passed up and down. We generally pick the prettiest girls in the group, and ask them to go round and smile at anybody and pass the collection plate up and down like you do in church. And there are some places that use something different. I ran into one place and I wish I could remember where it was, because I don't recall whether it was India, which as God knows is a poor country but they still pass the hat, or whether it was some other place, but they had a kind of sock made — a deep thing with an opening at the top of dark material and these things were passed. And you could put your whole hand in so that no-one would see the size of the contribution that you were making,

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and this might be a very good gimmick for an area like this one where people are not used to making contributions at the meeting, and where they might be self-conscious.

Now the other of your question is what kind of collection — I suppose you mean amounts. Well unfortunately there seems to be something about the alcoholic that once he gets sober he thinks of all the things he's wasted money on over the years, and all of a sudden he's hanging on to every cent he's got for dear life. He's trying to put back all that he's lost. He's trying to give all the things to his family that he's never been able to give them. He's buying cars and televisions, and all his kind of thing, and he comes to the AA meeting and he very much resents putting in more than 6d. or a 1/- . Now AA won't operate on a 1/- . In our country the usual donation is a quarter, everybody puts a quarter in the basket and this is not enough to operate an AA group either. And so sometimes the leader will, or Chairman, or Treasurer or whoever is making the announcement about passing the hat will say, "The group needs such-and-so and we have our expenses to meet," or, "We are going to make our contribution," or whatever it is, "so let's this night have it be a silent collection." Now that of course means that it has to be paper, because other coins make and a noise and the paper is silent. So I think that if you used that too, you'd get 10/- notes in that basket it might be a very great help.

You have Ian here now, who does a great deal of the work. He does all the work on "Mainstay". I know there is a subscription charge for "Mainstay" so that we hope that he's not out of pocket (but I bet he is) and on top of that he's also out of time. Now this is his personal and wonderful contribution, but this actually should be a responsibility of all the groups in New Zealand. Now there'd be other things you might want to do eventually. You might want to publish an introductory pamphlet, which would make it far easier for the New Zealand AA to identify with what's going on in New Zealand, rather than reading an American-based pamphlet which might not have such good identification. In other words, an office is able to do things which give it financial support, not only the contributions of the groups, but also the publishing of the literature, the publishing of introductory pamphlets, the publishing of the magazine — all of these things are not done wholly on an altruistic basis. They are done on the basis of making an honest profit which helps to support the central office, so that the Conference can be run. In other words, funds from that office would be the things that financed the transportation and so forth for delegates as you got into that. Now you can start out by having people make contributions to the General Service Conference, so that such things can be done as transportation if you want to, and in the long view perhaps get an office started, and these funds would be transferred to an operating entity.

RON: Eve, how far in your opinion is New Zealand away from the appointment of non-alcoholics to the executive, shall we call it, of Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand?

EVE: Well that ties in exactly, Ron, with what I was just saying. If you have an office, and if you have publications, and if you have an operating entity which involves finance, then you have trustees who serve as custodians for this. They are also the custodians of our traditions and 12 Steps, as well as of the services. But there isn't really need to have trustees, per-se, until you do have an operating entity which is responsible.

The trustees' responsibility is the actual operating of the office. Your Conference, as an advisory body, advises the office and the trustees as to what the needs of AA are, but the conference cannot operate an office because they are too far away. You'd have meetings once a year, and you'd have Assembly meetings three or four times a year. You couldn't possibly decide whether it was time to put another telephone in the office; this would have to be the responsibility of an operating committee which would be in the province of a general service board — or a committee. You don't have to call it a General Service Board, you could call it an Executive Committee which is the word you used, Ron.

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Now this question as to whether non-AA's should be on that committee would be one which you yourselves would decide. As you know, we have had 'nons' on our Board. As a matter of fact we had more 'non' than AA's, but that was because in the very early days when the Board was established nobody knew whether AA was going to work, and Bill could see that people out in the country weren't going to be anxious to send money to a bunch of alcoholics who might get drunk and spend it in New York; and so they thought that putting non-alcoholics sort of a protective measure on the Board would encourage the groups to send in the contributions. And of course it has worked that way, but even though that wouldn't be necessarily the case here, because your people have all demonstrated that AA works, and that we stay sober, and that we are responsible, and that we don't run off with the dough.

There is a great advantage to having some 'nons' on the Board, for the reason that they can speak for AA in a public way, and which we, because of our tradition of anonymity, may not. They can endorse us. It's very nice to be endorsed, let our friends recommend us. We can endorse other things, but non alcoholics can stand up and say, "This is a good thing, the AA's are doing this," or, "this is working", or, something of this kind. They can also be a great help to us in matters that we might need advice on, like finance. We have big financial men on an Investment Committee for example. Of course this sounds funny to you people who are trying to get a little money together, to think that you might ever be at a time when you would need help on finances, but the time may come. Or when you might need advice on publishing, you might have a good publishing man on the Board, who is not an AA, or a lawyer. There might come a time when some crackpot decided he wanted to sue AA. These things do happen, and if you have good legal advice it can be helpful. These are some of the reasons why it is nice and helpful to us to have a non alcoholic on the Committee or on the Board. Many people feel also that it is a good way, not only to relate themselves to the world around us, but also in a way to be grateful for the co-operation that so many people outside AA have given to us from the very beginning. I have heard one person say, it is sort of like a mark of humility on our part that we are not, you know, we don't know everything, we are still willing to learn and to hear the ideas of other people.

RON: Getting back a little bit more to the local level, Eve, we all seem to be going through this problem of defining services or a local inter-group service, and a place or rooms which alcoholics who are recovered, but are probably in the initial stages of recovery, can come to enjoy the fellowship of other alcoholics. Should these two be integrated, or should they be separated?

EVE: Well this of course is a question which has been causing difficulties everywhere ever since the very beginning, because there are alcoholics who do feel they need that place to come to when they first get sober, they have no home, and there are many things to be said for this functioning. However, the tendency has been in some places for the rooms to begin to dominate the Services. This is the problem of having them together. The people who are interested in the rooms don't quite see the need for the telephones answering service, and for the twelfth-step work, and all this sort of thing, and the result is that they get more interested in the rooms and they don't really give support to the actual answering of the telephone or to the twelfth-step work. On the other hand, the people who are interested in the larger view of service for the whole rather than for this one individual alcoholic who may be using the rooms, get impatient with the fact that the others don't work on the service picture, so you have a little conflict sometimes.

A club room actually is something which should be set up separate from AA, using something else besides the AA name — something like the "Serenity Club" or something of this kind, that may have the spirit of it but doesn't use the AA name, and a club is something which is separately incorporated and operated quite separately. Experience has indicated that it works better that way.

However, there are many smaller communities throughout the United States which have sort of a central location for AA. It has rooms, it has also an answering service, and as long as the service

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picture is followed through — in other words, that the new people who come in get the twelve-step out to them — and as long as the inner-group or service centre or whatever they call it or the rooms, continue to provide that the AA's can get to meetings — by that I don't mean provide transportation or, anything — but I mean make sure that they have sponsorship which is the important thing, then these things can operate.

I think you have to be aware of the problems when you start in on mixing up rooms and a service centre or an inter-group office. Sometimes it's not possible to have both, sometimes a community can't possibly support both, so you do the best you can with one, trying to see to it that the job of service is done, and that it doesn't disintegrate just into what we call a twelfth-step house, which is where alcoholics come and sit around all day and just drink tea and talk and don't ever do anything else. One of the problems is that the gal or guy who is answering the telephone, will go into a room full of people like that, and say that there's a man over on High Street who is in terrible shape, he wants someone to come and talk to him, and nobody will even volunteer to go; they're much too interested in sitting over their cup of tea in the rooms. This is the problem.

RON: I've just got one comment to make on that — we've really got Eve into a Kiwi state of mind, she said "tea" instead of "coffee".

EVE: I shall hate to give up my Kiwi button that's in my raincoat when I go to Australia tomorrow.

IAN: What is your experience with having meetings, regular AA meetings in rooms which are neither a service centre or a part service centre and club?

EVE: Our experience has indicated that it is far better not to have meetings in rooms or a service centre which is supposedly serving all of AA within an area. A service centre is to serve all groups within a given area. If you have meetings within those premises, other groups are very apt to feel that that meeting is getting more service than the other groups surrounding the area. So if possible it is suggested not to have meetings in an actual service office.

BILL: One last question on the financial business, and this is the paying of expenses of delegates to area assemblies and expenses of delegates from area assemblies to General Service Conferences. Could you explain how this is done in the States please.

EVE: In the first place it's not customary for us to pay transportation of delegates or what we call "committee members" to the actual area assemblies or what we call "committee meetings". The committee members generally come on their own, because the areas are broken down in small enough size so that there isn't too much hardship as far as transportation is concerned. In other words, if you had the South Island here; you might eventually want to cut it up into two committees, and no committee would have so far that they couldn't drive in their own car, so there wouldn't be great financial expense for the actual people to get to the area assembly.

However, we do pay a part of the transportation to the delegates to the General Service Conference, and this is very important for a good many reasons. No. 1: it guarantees that the delegates who are elected will be there. You might elect a delegate who could not afford to come all the way from Invercargill, or whatever you call it down there at the toe, all the way up to Massey. It might be something that he couldn't possibly do. People might recognize that in electing a delegate, and therefore don't elect the best man but elect the man with the most money — who might well not be the man who could serve the area the best. And so in order to equalise things, our General Service Conference is established so that delegates from California their areas pay \$100 out of the committee money for the transportation, and we pick up the rest. And the same thing is true if a delegate comes from Massachusetts, which is only a hundred miles away. The



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Committee puts up the \$100 and we pay everything over. Of course for Massachusetts we don't have to pay anything over, and for California we have to pay a good bit, but this means that no area is penalised because of the location of the General Service Conference into having to pay more in transportation. But more importantly is this question of getting the best men to service, instead of putting it on the basis of who can afford it.

Now this does lead to another question which I would like to just comment on, and we might get into it a little later — I don't know. And that is the question of, how does the General Service Conference get financed.

This is a problem because at the present time as you are growing into your Conference picture, you have a conference which is doing two jobs when actually a conference is set up to do one. Your conference at the moment is acting as an operative body, and also as an advisory body. Now the time will come I'm sure, when it's going to be important for New Zealand to have a central office where all inquiries from all over New Zealand can be located. This office will take upon itself to carry out the directives of the General Service Conference.

Now lots of clubs have meetings in the rooms, and they pay rent to the Club for the space, but in some cases this also causes problems because an alcoholic will go to a meeting in a Club sober and he enjoys the meetings, and he leaves and he gets drunk the next day and he goes back to the Club and he gets thrown out, because he's not a member. He's not a member of the Club, but he should always be welcome at an AA meeting, and this sometimes causes a little difficulty because the alcoholic does not understand the difference between the Club and an AA meeting. He's been led to believe that he would always be welcome at an AA meeting.

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BILL: At a local level we often get requests for speakers at various church groups, women's groups and this sort of thing — dare say the same thing happens in the States. How do you choose your speakers to go out in these instances?

EVE: This is another very important aspect of any local service committee, because there are some people, let's face it, who are articulate and who can speak in a way which presents the image of Alcoholics Anonymous in a most helpful way to another larger organisation. There are others who have wonderful AA stories — real drunk wogs — blow by blow descriptions of every drink they had in every pub for ever, which may have very funny incidents in it, and you can get away with that at an AA meeting, because we all know that we all of us get helped by speaking. But this is not the man you would want to have go and speak at the Rotary Club, or the Lions, or a church group, or something of that kind. Therefore this is also one of the provinces of a committee operating within an area, that you have people that you draw upon to do these speaking engagements.

Now there is another factor in this which might have a bearing in these smaller communities. Sometimes it might be that Bill here for example, who is very well known as a Construction Engineer, might not want to break his anonymity and speak at a meeting where he was well known here. Therefore you ask somebody from Timaru to come up here to Christchurch and address a Rotary or a church group, and then you volunteer that you will send Bill down to Timaru to do the same thing. This can be done to protect anonymity within a smaller community where everybody is pretty well known. There is something that sometimes bothers people.

NEIL: Well Eve, I would like to ask, do the prison authorities in the States give AA much support, and are they in favour of releasing prisons to outside meetings?

EVE: For the first part of your question the answer is pretty definitely yes, although of course individual prison administrators may take a dim view of it. We've found that once in a while a par-

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ticular warden will say, "No". He may have had some bad experience somewhere along the line, and don't forget that sometimes individual AAs themselves can cause some of these problems, because we forget that our only province is to conduct an AA meeting and not to tell the prison administrator how to run the prison. And there are occasionally AAs who take it upon themselves to explain this you see, and this gives AA a kind of a bad reputation in that prison.

However, this question of letting them go to meetings before they leave, is one that has not been done generally. There are a few prisons I know of who have done this. There are also some other — particularly in Texas, they let them go out and go to meetings, they also let them go and speak at big State conferences, which helps to demonstrate the need for services to institutions, but I sometimes feel that this is very bad for the ego of the sick man, who will come up and speak and get a great deal of kudos showered on him after speaking. It must be very hard for them to relate themselves properly to the community when they come out on their own, without all the patting on the back that they get at a convention meeting.

However, there are also some things being started in a few places that are free-for-all sponsorship arrangements whereby a sponsor from a community is, someone volunteers from a community to sponsor a man who is coming out, they have an opportunity to meet one another in prison, and talk about some of the problems. This gives a man an opportunity, too, to feel that he is welcome back in his community. One of the problems on this, is the fact that I think that most of the AA experience, and I think the prison authorities back us up, shows that the great danger to the inmate leaving prison is the first 24 hours, and if someone isn't right there at the gate sort of thing, that within 24 hours he gets overcome with all the fear of rejection by society, and all the old negative thinking, and he can very easily slip back.

IAN: Eve, we have a National Society on Alcoholism in this country, affiliated with the National Council on Alcoholism in the United States, and we would like to have your suggestions about our correct relationship with them, particularly of AAs speaking at their public meetings, and the degree to which we should co-operate in a general presentation of, really, their case to the public.

EVE: This is a very difficult question to work out, because actually the key is just what you said — co-operation, not affiliation, and how do we co-operate? The big problem seems to be that very often AAs themselves get involved with the National Society, or the National Council as we call it, which is fine because there is no reason in the world why AA members shouldn't share the great bulk of their experience in this whole problem of alcoholism and recovery. It would be silly if we didn't share this. But the problem lies in their relationships, in other words, when they are working with N.S.A. they are not wearing the AA hat. It's very hard to wear two hats especially since most of us don't have two heads. But they do have to wear the separate hat at the separate time. In other words if a man was working with N.S.A. he would be working as an individual in the community. He would not be working as an AA member. Therefore he would not contact AA groups to do the work of the National Society.

AA groups should take the responsibility — I heard you ask the question about a public meeting. A public meeting on alcoholism is something which the N.S.A. would arrange. This would have nothing whatsoever to do with Alcoholics Anonymous. However, Alcoholics Anonymous itself can put on public meetings, and should, in order to acquaint the community with the fact that AA is at work in the community as a public service, as a community service, that we're available to anybody who wants it, and if we put on a public meeting, we should be able to finance the renting of the hall. These are services which Alcoholics Anonymous should provide for itself. The National Society can of course put on meetings on alcoholism, but AA is not an authority on alcoholism. Let us never forget that we are amateurs in this field, and let's keep our amateur standing.

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Now there is no reason why the National Society may not invite an AA member to speak at one of their meetings, the same as the Rotary Club does or somebody else, a church group or anything else. They shouldn't rely on AA to put on their meetings any more than AA should rely on the National Society to do the services which are literally AA services. Now this has happened in some places when AA has been slow about assuming the responsibility for their own services, the National Council has stepped in and done some of these things, and it's there that you get great big conflict. There is one State in the United States that has an alcoholism programme that it is written in their bill, and the bill that the State Legislature passed that part of their province is to assist Alcoholics Anonymous. Well this of course is completely outside of our traditions, but it's because that State never developed any services of their own, and so this Society was able to move in, and they think they're doing a wonderful job — they answer the telephone of the Society, they relegate the twelfth-step work; this is AA's responsibility not that of the Society. And I think that we should do everything we can, in a very friendly way to make clear that we operate as Alcoholics Anonymous, and that we are delighted to co-operate, but the National Society operates as the National Society, and there is no real affiliation.

Now you're going to have two visitors coming out here for the National Society who are also AAs, and I am sure you will find that they do the same thing. If they go to an AA meeting, they'll speak as AAs, but if they are at the National Society speaking, they will not mention that they are AAs. They will work on the basis that they are in the alcoholism field.

IAN: Eve, at times the National Society has indicated that they were disappointed that more AAs did not become members; they have an annual membership and she was very disappointed. One good friend of mine did say write to G.S.O. about this, and they seemed surprised that the National Society expected this, and they reported that in the United States such a thing would never be expected. Could we have your views on that.

EVE: It is entirely a matter up to the individual. The National Council on Alcoholism puts on regular public drives for money, and for membership dues. And there are some AA's who are interested in this, and therefore they go ahead and do it. But they have to enter this as individuals, and not as AA members because here again, if people embrace the National Council on alcoholism or the National Society here on the basis of their being AA members you can't help but link the AA name along with the National Society. In other words you couldn't have a story about Bill L-S. prominent Consulting Engineer and member of Alcoholics Anonymous, is now serving on the National Society. But you could have Bill L-S. prominent engineer is now serving on the National Society, and he'll be lending his prestige and value as a citizen returned to his own profession in the N.S.A., but he could not drag the AA name with him.

Well I think it's been wonderful to have this chance to talk a little bit on tape about some of these things that you in the Assembly feel are so important. I know it's been terribly interesting to me in speaking around at so many of the groups that I have visited, and I've had a chance to visit so many and I am so grateful for that opportunity. It's been tremendously interesting to me, and a great boost to find that the questions and answers sessions that we've had after so many of the meetings, have been of such interest. So many people have had questions. There is evidently great interest on the part of many people here in this whole Service picture, and I have a feeling that you are going to go forward very rapidly from now on.

I've had an absolutely marvellous visit in New Zealand — I could never thank all of you enough for what you have done to make my visit such a full one, not only from the point of view of AA, which of course is terribly important, but also from the point of view of having an opportunity to see your beautiful country, North Island and South Island. I am particularly grateful that the boys even moved the clouds off Mt. Cook before we got there, so that I could see that beautiful white cone against the blue blue sky during my visit there. And I hope that some day, I'll have an opportunity to come back and see this beautiful country of yours — and you come to see us!

## **SERVICE THE THIRD LEGACY**

### **NZ'S SERVICE STRUCTURE**

A guide to General Service Structure issued by the World Service of AA states:

" Among the precious possessions that we in AA share with one another are our service responsibilities. This consists of such basic services as carrying the message to another alcoholic, speaking at AA meetings or acting as an officer of an AA group.

"Every service that AA offers has come about as the result of a demonstrated need and is based on experience. No function of our Fellowship has developed as the creation of a single individual, nor has it remained as a function unless it was seen to meet a real need. The Steps were written from the pooled experience of 100 recovered alcoholics. The Traditions were evolved from the actual experience and activity of AA groups over a period of 10 years.

"The aim of all AA service is identical with AA's primary purpose that is to bring sobriety within reach of all who want it."

The service structure in New Zealand consists of group, intergroup, assembly, conference and world service.

Group service is well covered in the pamphlet 'The AA Group'. Usually there is a secretary and then other officers as required such as chairman, treasurer, steering committee and, as required, group conscience meetings.

It is the responsibility of each group to appoint an Intergroup rep., where needed, and a general service representative. These officers carry the group conscience to, and report back from, intergroup meetings and assemblies.

Intergroups, where they are functioning, are attended by the representatives of groups making up the intergroup. The duties and responsibilities of an intergroup and how to set them up are covered in the Guideline MG 2 "Central or Intergroup Offices". Some of the functions are sharing of group problems, setting up answer-phone services, arranging 12th step calls, providing speakers for non AA meetings, arranging institution sponsors and setting up central offices.

Assemblies are called from time to time in order to discuss the business of an area. In NZ the areas are Northern, the top half of the North Island from Turangi North; Central area, the bottom half of the North Island including New Plymouth and Gisborne, and Nelson, Blenheim and Kaikoura in the South Island; Southern area, the balance of the South Island.

Each area is responsible for the election of three delegates to the NZ General Service Conference, nomination of world service members and their stand-ins.

The GSRs from each group meet to try and improve methods of carrying the message of AA, discuss area business and share group experience and problems.

The responsibilities of a GSR are covered in the pamphlet, "The GSR may be the most important member of your group". The area's responsibilities are well described "The Service Manual". One area of responsibility is the payment of an equalisation cost which is set by the Conference each year to cover the cost of sending the three elected delegates to the two Conference meetings held in Wellington.

The N.Z. General Service Conference consists of the Chairman who is elected by the conference, three elected delegates from each area, three non-alcoholic delegates who are appointed by Conference, with the areas having the right to recommend nominees. These are the members with voting rights and at all times they are guided by the Traditions and General Service guidelines. Also in attendance are the secretary/treasurer of the Conference, and the office coordinator.

The responsibilities of delegates are covered in "The Service Manual" and "The Twelve Concepts of Service."

The delegates carry their assembly conscience to, and report back from, Conference on matters discussed and recommendations made.

One responsibility of Conference is to elect Delegates and their stand-ins to the World Service meetings which are held every two years.

These delegates carry the conscience of NZAA and report back to the fellowship on their return to NZ.

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The recommendations for a World Service member are:—

1. Delegates should be legal residents of and preferably citizens of the country they represent.
2. The two delegates from a country may both be AA members or one AA and one non-AA. AA members should have at least two years continuous sobriety, and five is a desirable period.
3. One of the two delegates should come from the General Service Board, or the overall service structure.
4. The other delegate should be a salaried or volunteer staff member capable of carrying out the suggested procedures and responsibilities suggested by the World Service meeting.
5. Delegates should have a working knowledge of the English language.
6. The two delegate should have leadership qualities, genuine service interest, organisational abilities, acknowledge and love of AA and the time to attend the World Service meeting fully informed on AA, in their countries.
7. Perhaps even more important the delegates should have the time to present and carry out the decisions reached at the meeting.
8. It is preferable for each country to send two delegates to the World Service meeting but there will be no denial of attendance for one delegate.
9. In an effort to stimulate interest and support for the World Service meeting it was suggested that delegates report back to their General Service Boards and conferences. It was hoped that they would report to as many intergroups and groups as possible in an effort to keep members aware of their participation at the level of World Service and in this way generate the feeling of responsibility in contributing towards the delegates fees.

At present the cost of NZ is \$US700 per member per meeting. Using our estimated membership of 3,000 this breaks down to about 30c a year.

### General Service Office

The GSO is situated in Wellington and is staffed by members of AA. It runs as a business office but definitely on AA lines.

The duties of the office are many and varied, the biggest of which is the distribution of AA approved literature. Other duties include:—

- Maintaining communication with groups and assemblies.
- Production and distribution of "Mainstay", newsletters, conference minutes and reports, NZ Directory and various statistical returns.
- Co-operation with outside agencies.
- Continued concern for the alcoholic who still suffers.

The GSO can only be maintained by contributions from the Fellowship. In all service positions in the structure, apart from salaried positions, the principle of rotation is paramount.

Finally, and most important of all the underlying reason for a service structure is Tradition 5: "Each group has but one primary purpose...to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

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## Appendix 7

### The Twelve Steps and Serenity Prayer in Maori

TENEI E WHAI AKE KO NGĀ  
KAUPAPA 12 O TE ARAWHATA  
KA PIKI KI TE ORA

1 E whakaae ana matau ko te  
waipiro to matau rangatira, a, kare  
matau e kaha ana ki te  
whakamutu.

2 Ka aru tonu matau he MEA  
ATUA nui ake i a matau ko ia te  
ritenga orange.

3 Kua whakarite atu e matau me  
tuku matau ki raro i te aroaro o te  
Atua, a, ki a mohio pai ai matau ki  
a la tonu.

4 Kua whakahau katoa i a matau,  
tera ki te taha a tinana, ki te taha  
a wairua hoki.

5 Kua korerotia aku he ki te Atua  
i Runga Rawa, ki ahau tonu, ki  
aka hoa tangata hoki.

6 E whakaponu ana matau ma te  
Atua hai whakamurua i o matau  
he.

7 Ka inoi atu hoki ki a IA ki a  
whakakore o matau pohehetanga.

8 Kua rarangitia te hunga i pa  
kino au, a, kua whakaae au me  
haere atu ki a ratau katoa ki te  
whakatika i nga henga i pa ki  
runga i a ratau.

9 Kua tae a tinana au ki a ratau i  
runga i te rangimaria na, kare kau  
mo te pa i te mamaetanga ki  
tetehe, ki tetehe ranei.

10 E whakatikatika tonu ana  
matau i a matau ano, a, mehemea  
ka pa kino ki tetehe ka korerotia e  
matau o matau he.

11 E kimi tonu ana matau i nga  
ahuatanga a Te Runga Rawa, i  
roto i o matau inoi me o matau  
tangi ki a la: a, e rapu ana hoki  
nga ahuatanga a te Atua hai  
orange mo matau.

12 I te mea kua oho matau na te  
Wairua Tapu a Te Atua, tenei ra  
matau kai te whakaatu ki nga  
hunga e ngau kino ana i te  
waipiro kia tirohia i nga kaupapa a  
te AA hai painga mo ratau, mo  
matau hoki.

### TE INOI RANGIMARIA A TE AA

Homai ra e Koe e Te Atua te  
rangimariatanga ki runga i ahau  
kia u te mohiotanga kare i ahau te  
mana hai whakahuri i tetehe mea  
kai a Koe tonu, homai hoki te  
kaha ki roto i ahau ki a kore e  
pokanoa, me te maramatanga kia  
noho marama ahau.

Mehemea ko te unu waipiro kai te  
whakakino i a koe, na ko te  
ununga te he.

## Appendix 7

### THESE ARE THE 12 STEPS IN THE LADDER OF COMPLETE SOBRIETY

1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

2 Come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3 Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

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

7 Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12 Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps we tried to carry this message to Alcoholics and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

### AA'S SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

*If drink makes problems for you, then drink is your problem.*

## Notes

### CHAPTER 1 — The Beginnings.

1 Bill W. 'AA's Legacy of Service' in The AA Service Manual. 1979. AA World Services. New York.

2 Anon: 'AA Comes of Age', AA World Services Inc New York, 1957, 'Landmarks in AA History' p71.

3 Anon: 1965 'AA 30' A Book about AA's 30th Anniversary Year and International Convention; New York, p37.

4 "The Oxford Group — founded by a Lutheran minister, The Rev. Frank D. Buckman. It developed on college campuses (i.e. Oxford 1921) then spread internationally. It emphasised 'Life changing' or conversion and 'sharing' or public confession of one's sins, often at house parties. The ideals of the group were 'Four Absolutes' — absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. Life-changing was seen as the only remedy for nationalism that led to wars. The movement then acquired a new name, Moral Rearmament (MRA) in 1938."

This succinct description comes from: 'Saved by the Net' AA a social Network for Rehabilitation unpublished MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 1971. L.M. McFerran. L. Th.

5 Anon 1965 'AA 30' A Book about AA's 30th Anniversary Year and International Convention'. New York. p37.

6 Ernest Kurt 'Not God' A History of Alcoholics Anonymous Hazelden Educational Services, Center City, Minnesota. 1979.

7 Anon. 'AA Comes of Age' AA World Services Inc. New York 1957 p58.

8 'AA Comes of Age' p64.

9 Anon 'AA 30' A Book about AA's 30th Anniversary Year and International Convention. New York p38.

10 AA Comes of Age p68.

11 Anon: "AA 30' A Book about AA's 30th Anniversary Year and International Convention. N.Y. 1965 p39.

12 Anon: 'AA Comes of Age' p74. A fascinating footnote to AA in New Zealand and the Oxford Group: Ian McE the founder of AA in New Zealand, whilst in London in search of an answer to his alcoholism visited the London headquarters of the movement and spoke to Rev. Frank Buckman. Ref: letter to Bill W. 4 Dec 1950.

13 Ernest Kurtz 'Not God A History of Alcoholics Anonymous' Hazelden Educational Services, Minnesota 1979. p8-9.

### CHAPTER 2 — Early Members — 1946-1950

1 Ian M. Talk to 30th Anniversary Convention Dinner, Massey University, 2 Feb 1976.

2 Readers Digest October 1944 issue



3 In retrospect, is it important to note that the word 'recovery' is synonymous with 'cure' in the McGoldrick article and that he was able to identify himself in print as a member of AA — an action which alcoholics have avoided since the formulation of the Twelve Traditions first published in 1946 and adopted by AA in June 1950 at the first International Convention, Cleveland. Tradition Eleven: "Our public relations are based on attraction rather than promotion. We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films."

4 Ian M. Taped recollections Aug/Sept 1975 p1-2.

5 Jack Alexander 'Alcoholics Anonymous' The Saturday Evening Post, 1 March 1941 The Curtis Publishing Company.

Ian M. Ian's second letter to the General Service Office of AA New York was dated 8 April 1946. In this letter he said that when Bobbie B.'s letter of 1 March 1946 arrived he had been home from hospital for one week. Later in the same letter Ian stated that he had been home one month at the time he wrote; putting his return from the Institution back to 8 March. If he had been there for 3 to 4 months it would make his stay roughly Dec, January and February. He wrote on 3 Jan from the hospital. In his written notes Ian gives the date of entry to the hospital as October 1946. His memory is at fault; admission must have been October 1945 or later in the year.

6 'Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' New York, AA World Services Inc 1957 p35.

7 Above p16.

8 Ian M. Notes November 1973

9 'Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' p201.

10 Above p200.

11 Above p198.

12 Above p83.

13 'Alcoholics Anonymous' AA Sterling Area Services London 2nd edition 1955.

14 'Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' p164.

15 'A Southern Belle'.

16 Letter: Bobbie B. to Ian M. 17 May 1946.

17 Letter Bobbie B. to Ian M. 27 June 1946.

18 Pat, Wellington article in 'Grapevine' Sept 1976.

19 Correspondence: Gilbert Landsdown and General Service Office, New York, Feb 1946 — June 1949.

20 Letter from Ian M. to Bobbie B. and Charlotte L. 18 April 1947.

21 As above 4 February 1948.

22 Letter from Charlotte L. to Ian M. 29 August 1946.

23 Letter from Ian M. to Bobbie B. 18 April 1947.

24 Letter from Bobbie B. to Ian M. 1 May 1947.

25 Lillian Roth, 'I'll Cry Tomorrow' Arther Barker, London 1955.

26 Letter from Bobbie B. to Ian M. 9 July 1947.

27 Taped recollections, Aug/Sept 1975 p3.

28 Interview by Sigrid Kirk. Star Weekender Sat 1 Aug 1981.

- 29 Taped Recollections Aug/Sept 1975 p5-6.
- 30 'Unity' January 1980 p6.
- 31 Personal letter. 2 Nov 1975.
- 32 'AA Comes of Age' p70.
- 33 McFerran L.M. 'Saved by the Net' Alcoholics Anonymous — A Social Network for Rehabilitation. M.A. Thesis Dept of Anthropology. University of Auckland 1971.

## **CHAPTER 3 — Early Groups — 1951-1956**

- 1 Letter from Ian M. to Bobbie B. 19 May 1948.
- 2 'Unity' January 1980 p6.
- 3 General Service Office, New York records.
- 4 Above.
- 5 Letter to General Service Office NY from Ian M. 7 January 1951.
- 6 Letter from General Service Office NY 19 Jan 1951.
- 7 'Alcoholics Anonymous' p89, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Second Edition 1955.
- 8 'Student's Guide to AA' AA General Service Conf pamphlet 1971.
- 9 'History of AA in Timaru' compiled by Donald MacR. Sept 1975.
- 10 'History of AA in the Far South' compiled by Steve McC. 4 Oct 1975.
- 11 Recollections of AA in Palmerston North. Don McL. 1 Nov 1975.
- 12 Schuckit, M. 'The Alcoholic Woman: A Literature Review, 'Psychiatry in Medicine 3 (1): 37-43'.
- 13 AA Comes of Age p199.
- 14 "Marty Mann Answers Your Questions about Drinking and Alcoholism. Marty Mann Holt, Rinehart and Winston, NY 1970.
- 15 "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers. AA World Service Inc 1980.
- 16 Letter from Lil T. to Bobbie B. GSO NY 19 May 1949.
- 17 Letter from Anne L. GSO NY to Lil T. 21 June 1949.
- 18 Personal Letter Norah B. to author 7 Nov 1984.
- 19 'Mainstay' Vol 29 No. 4. Sept 1983.
- 20 'Unity' Jan 1980 p6.
- 21 'Not God A History of Alcoholics Anonymous' Ernest Kurtz.
- 22 'Unity' Jan 1980 p7.
- 23 Dr. G. Wall. Non-AA Member GSO Board 1.4.77.

## **CHAPTER 4 — The Groups Coming Together — 1957-1960**

- 1 Christchurch 'Star Sun' 6 August 1949.
- 2 Letter from Ian M. to Bobbie B. 12 August 1949.
- 3 Letter from Ian M. to Ann L. 29 August 1949.
- 4 Letter from Ann L. to Ian M. 12 September 1949.
- 5 Letter to GSO New York 24 October 1950.
- 6 The General Service Conference of AA in NZ was not set up until February 1964.

- 7 Letter to Bill W. 4 Dec 1950.
- 8 'Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' p194.
- 9 Above p96.
- 10 Letter from Ian M. to Bill W. 4 Dec 1950.
- 11 'Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' p111.
- 12 Open letter to NZ AA's from Ian.
- 13 Letter from Ian M. to Bill W. 13 March 1951.
- 14 Letter from Ian M. to Ann, GSO New York 13 April 1951.
- 15 Letter from Ian M. to Bill W. 13 March 1951.
- 16 'Mainstay' Vol 1 No. 6 Nov 1955.
- 17 Above Vol 1 No. 10 March 1956.
- 18 Above Vol 2 No. 2 July 1956.
- 19 Letter from Ian McE. to Bill W. 11 December 1954.
- 20 Ian McE Speech to Anniversary Dinner of AA Massey University 2 February 1976.
- 21 Tia T. Personal recollections of Hamilton Group. 10 February 1981.
- 22 Above Vol 1 No. 1 June 1955.
- 23 Above Vol 1 No. 11 April 1956.
- 24 Above Vol 2 No. 3 Aug 1956.
- 25 Above Vol 2 No. 4 Sept 1956.
- 26 Above Vol 2 No. 9 Feb 1957.
- 27 Minutes of 3rd Meeting AA Intergroup Service Committee 10 May 1958.
- 28 Minutes of 13th Meeting above 14 Nov 1959.
- 29 Mainstay Vol 19 No. 2 Aug 1973.
- 30 'Unit' January 1980 p6.
- 31 Letter from Ian McE. to Bobbie B. and Charlotte 18.4.1947.
- 32 Letter from Bobbie B. to Ian McE. 1 May 1947.
- 33 Letter from Ian McE. to Bobbie and Charlotte 30 June 1947.
- 34 Letter from Bobbie B. to Ian McE. 13 July 1948.
- 35 Letter from Ann McF. to Ian McE. 10 Oct 1950.
- 36 Letter from Ian McE. to Bobbie B. 12 August 1949.
- 37 Letter from Ian McE. to Ann McF. 19 Oct 1950.
- 38 Intergroup Minutes 26 Oct 1958, 13 Dec 1958, 14 April 1959, 2 May 1959, 28 May 1960, 2 July 1960, 17 Sept 1960, 10 Mar 1962, 30 Mar 1963.
- 39 Wellington AA Intergroup Minutes: 27 June 1964.
- 40 L.M. McFerran 'Saved by the Net — Alcoholics Anonymous, A Social Network for Rehabilitation' M.A. Thesis (unpublished) University of Auckland 1971.

## **CHAPTER 5 — 'Mainstay'**

- 1 'Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' p201-202.
- 2 'Mainstay' Jubilee Issue Vol 25 No. 8. June 1980.
- 3 Above.
- 4 29th Meeting, Central Area Assembly, Palmerston North, 15 June 1963.
- 5 General Service Conference of AA, Arahina, Marton 8.8.64.
- 6 Minutes of First Meeting, AA Intergroup Service Committee 15 March 1958.

## **CHAPTER 6 — Service Council, Part 1 — 1960-1964**

- 1 Wellington AA Intergroup Service Committee Minutes 2 July 1960.
- 2 'Unity' January 1980. p3.
- 3 Letter to Bill W. from Tony 24 Hour Club Feb-March 1951.
- 4 'Unity' Jan 1980 p4. Service Centre Committee members — Sel C., Tony K., Bluey W., Jack S., Vi J., Alf J., George G., Bill W. and Justin W.
- 5 Wellington AA Intergroup Service Committee Minutes 25 Feb 1961.
- 6 Above 27 April 1961.
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- 8 AA Service Council of New Zealand — Minutes of Meeting, Wellington 29 July 1961.
- 9 10 July 1962
- 10 Wellington AA Intergroup Service Committee Minutes 10 March 1962.
- 11 AA Service Council of New Zealand — Minutes 14 July 1962.
- 12 Wellington Intergroup Minutes 11 August 1962.
- 13 AA Service Council of New Zealand — Minutes of special meeting, Gisborne, 31 March 1963.
- 14 'AA Comes of Age' p105.
- 15 Bill W. 'The AA Way of Life' AA World Services Inc. New York 1967.

## **CHAPTER 7 — Service Council, Part 2 — 1965-1976**

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- 2 Above. p10. Q2. (Summarised).
- 3 'Understanding Anonymity' General Service Conference pamphlet USA 1972.
- 4 Personal letter, Dr. S.W.P. Mirams 4 August 1981.
- 5 Minutes of Steering Committee of NZ Service Conference of AA Wellington. Thursday 17 Sept 1964.
- 6 Anon 'AA Comes of Age' p86.
- 7 Personal letter. Dr. S.W.P. Mirams 4 August 1981.
- 8 'AA Comes of Age' p26.
- 9 'AA 30' A book about AA's 30th Anniversary Year and International Convention' AA World Services Inc NY 1965.
- 10 Material adapted with permission from 'Challenge Weekly' NZ's National Christian Newspaper, reprinted in 'Mainstay' Vol 29 No. 4. Sept 1983.
- 11 Report to World Service Meeting Oct 5-7 1972.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Quoted by Ernest Kurtz in 'Not God A History of Alcoholics Anonymous.' Hazelden Educational Services Centre City Minnesota 1979.
- 14 Dr. Fraser McDonald 'Alcoholics Anonymous' NSAD 1977 Summer School — Massey University Feb 3rd 1977. Full address Chapter 8.