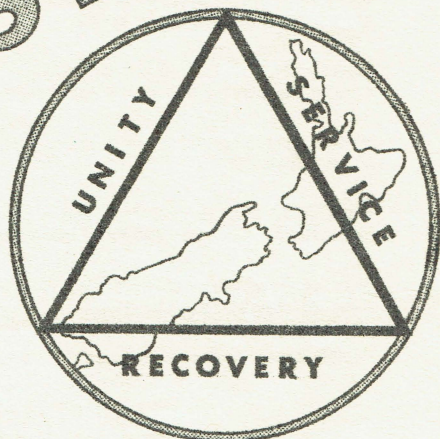


*Donald Tim.*

# A.A.

*is our*

# MAINSTAY



Vol. 10 No. 6  
NOVEMBER - 1 9 6 4

AN A.A. MEETING IN PRINT

ADOPTED AS THE VOICE OF ALCOHOLICS

ANONYMOUS IN NEW ZEALAND

BY THE

New Zealand

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

of Alcoholics Anonymous

(Subscription 10/- a year to -

BOX 6458, WELLINGTON)

**A**LCOHOLICS **A**NONYMOUS 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.



## 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.

## 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 requirement 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 centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics 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.

The very important Twelfth Step of A.A. includes the words "carry THIS message". We say "includes" because there are three parts to the step "having had a spiritual awakening we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs". It seems important to know exactly what "this" message is. As for all details of the A.A. recovery programme it is found concisely put on page 60 of the 2nd edition (page 72, 1st edition).

"Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after, make clear three pertinent ideas;

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He was asked.

Being CONVINCED, we were at step three which is that we decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

This is the point at which would be A.A.'s separate and follow divers courses to their ultimate recovery or return to active alcoholism.

Let us say at once that probably no one faces the problem of his recovery from alcoholism as a clear cut decision at this point however desirable that would be. In other words we are not convinced at this point and for varying times we twist and turn looking for a way of avoiding that fateful decision.

This may be necessary to ultimate recovery but it seems that there would be every advantage in knowing exactly what we are doing. From the quotation of the first part of this step it would appear that it is the general rule for the



newcomer to read personal stories and hear them from his sponsor. Then to read about alcoholism in the book and then most of us turn to the chapter "We Agnostics"; looking for that loop hole. Remember that the founder of A.A. was an agnostic. At every point on this route he will read that it is unlikely that he can recover without help. In the chapter "We Agnostics" the reader is told that "he may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer." (p.44). Just before setting out the programme the book says "Half measures availed us nothing". This is the experience of the 100 or so recoveries up to the writing of the book. As this is a programme of rigorous honesty - and few disagree with that - it seems sound to face the facts and even more so - to present them to the newcomer. No one suggests that anyone must follow the programme but the recovery rate is so low that it seems wise to ask ourselves if we are giving sufferers all they need to recover. No doctor would tell a patient part of his complaint or suggest that he take only part of the treatment; the easy part, at that.

Full directions for carrying this message are in the chapter "Working With Others" and we commend them to all. Anything less is only a modified version that may be working for you - at present - but might be quite ineffective with another alky. "Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery but they are indispensable".

Editor.

"When all is said and done" ..... more is said than done. Anon.

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AA . . AA . . AA

## REFLECTIONS OF A FRIEND

### STEP 12

The secret of true and lasting happiness in this life is to forget oneself in the service of others. It is also sound therapy as a remedy for self-centredness, and finally, it is a manifest indication of the presence of moral goodness, because, as the philosophical saying has it, goodness necessarily spreads itself.

The alcoholic has arrived at sobriety by means of the Steps; they have moulded him into a new person, given him spiritual and psychological riches, even physically he is a better man every way. They have also led him to a new life through a spiritual awakening which he has experienced; through meditation and prayer he has come to place his values properly; he has a new vision of things; he can now see clearly and distinguish the essentials from the mere accidentals; he knows now what are the things really worth striving for and having.

He reflects on all the advantages A.A. has brought him; also how being led to A.A., and the virtues he has since acquired are the free gift of God's bounty; and he recalls that there are very many people who are now what he was once and thus his pity for these fellow-sufferers of his, forces him to want to help them. He knows how much he himself has received and what A.A. has done for him, so it is only natural that he would desire to spread this message of hope and deliverance.

This twelfth step, which is one that the Alcoholic will find himself practicing and should continue to practice for the rest of his life, is a masterpiece of wisdom; it provides a healthy outlet for his desire to help others like himself and also furnishes a practical therapy of maintaining sobriety, as in his technique of helping a fellow-sufferer, he will have to recall his own problems with alcohol and his defeats too, and this is salutary because it will keep him solidly



6.

grounded in that virtue which is essential for maintaining sobriety as it also was for its acquirement - humility.

"We TRIED to carry this message to alcoholics". There is a genuine humility beneath the phrasing of this "we tried"; the alcoholic has become truly humble, he has learned not to trust in himself, so he would not say: "We carried" but "we tried to carry"; he knows that of himself he is capable of very little but with the power of God behind him, he will attempt anything however much it may seem to supersede his powers. There is also a subtle discernment behind this "we tried" - the alcoholic does not have to succeed, all he is to do is to make the attempt, leaving the issue to God's providence; and since all he is to do is to try, the recovered alcoholic will not be exposed to the danger of disappointment or discouragement at the failure of his efforts: they really never do fail, because the intrinsic and lasting value of kindness is never lost, and also even if he does not succeed in "drying out" his charge, he has certainly succeeded in keeping himself sober by self-forgetting efforts for the other person's good.

In the programme of achieving sobriety in A.A., ways of thinking, of judging and of acting are gradually instilled into the alcoholic. Now a philosophy of life does just these things, and thus the system of A.A. is a philosophy of life and an admirable one. Since alcoholism seems to be a physiological and a psychological problem and thus with repercussions on the spiritual level, it is necessary that the alcoholic be treated on this three-fold plane; he must be given principles not only to help him achieve sobriety but also to guide him in his life of sobriety. This A.A. provides for him in its philosophy of life, which has been designed, proved and perfected under the very circumstances and obstacles which face every alcoholic. Since then, the alcoholic finds his problem of alcoholism has gone deep into his whole being, influencing him in every sphere of his life;

7.

he takes the principles of A.A.'s steps to sobriety and applies them to all the circumstances of his living, to guide him to a full, adjusted and happy life.

I would single out as the special virtues of the whole programme of A.A. as humility, honesty, dependence on God (especially manifested by prayer) and fraternal kindness, which leads us to always putting the other person before ourselves. This latter is the distinctive sign by which God's friends are known - by the love they have for each other: and there is a magnificent reward promised for its practice. For He, who rewards a cup of cold water given in His Name, will certainly recompense munificently the kindness shown to others, since He has said:

"What you do to these least ones, you do unto Me."

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# CENTRAL AREA ASSEMBLY

BLENHEIM - SATURDAY, 5TH DECEMBER.

MASONIC HALL

SEYMOUR & CHARLES STREETS -

12 noon to 1 p.m. BUFFET LUNCH . .

2 p.m. Area Assembly . . .

8 p.m. Public Meeting . . . .

CONTACTS - Bruce - Phone 1362 (day) 654k (night)

Bill - Phone 7030

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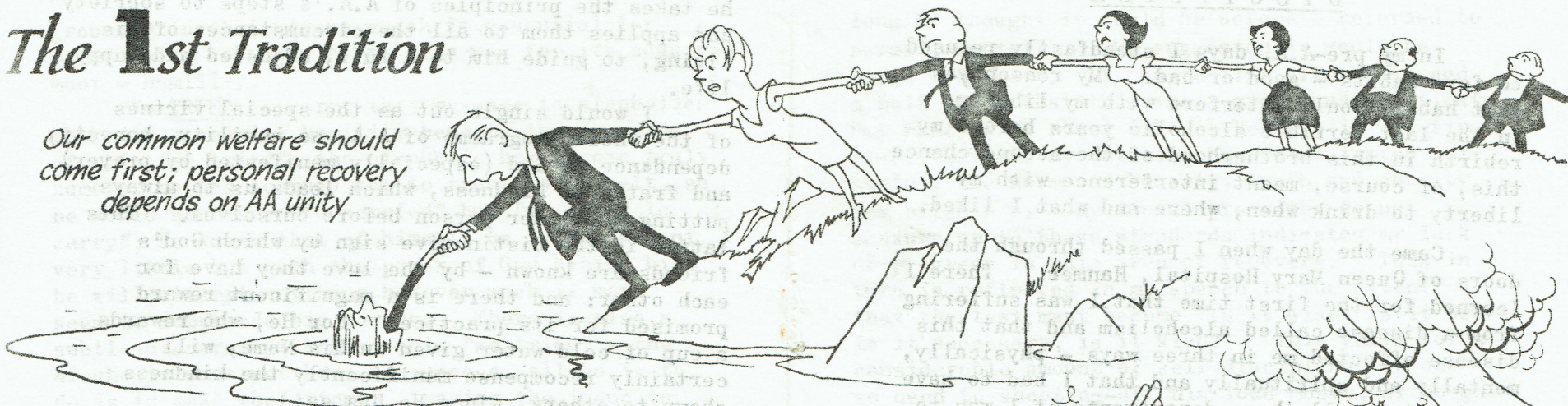
# WILL POWER

They told him it couldn't be done  
With a will he went right to it  
He tackled the thing that couldn't  
be done  
And couldn't do it !!

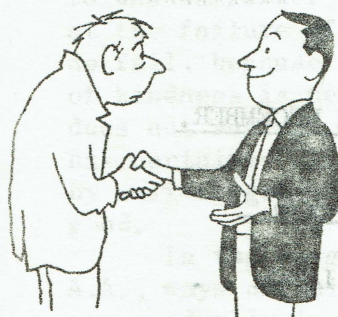


# The 1st Tradition

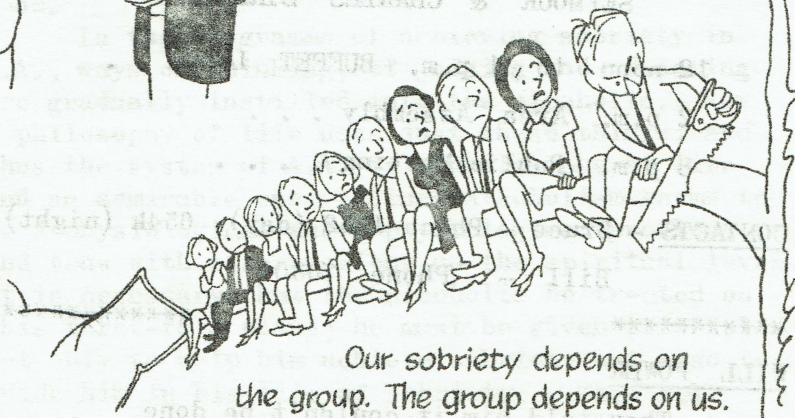
Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on AA unity



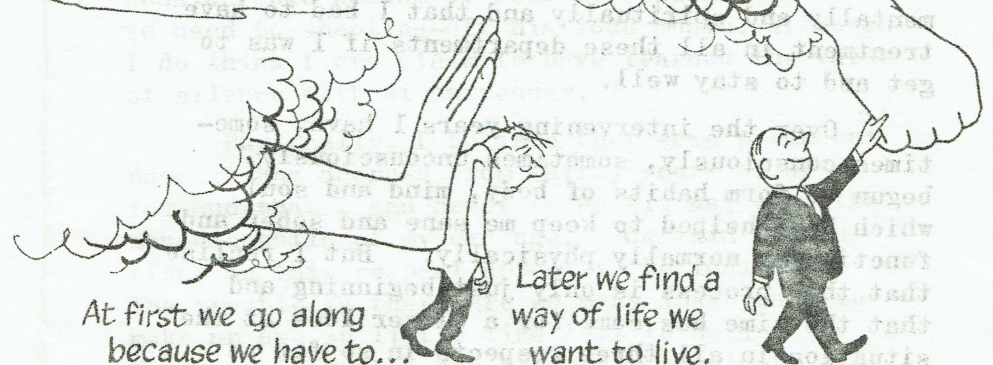
There are no "musts" or "don'ts"...



...but we soon learn that unless we curb our individual desires and ambitions, we can damage the group.

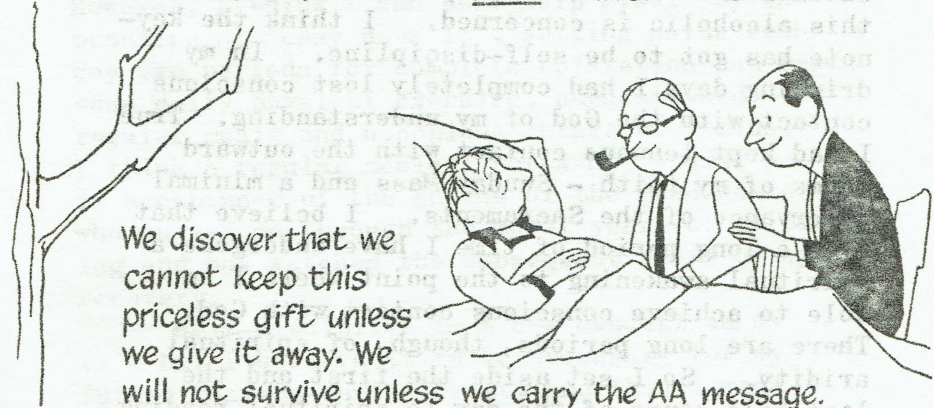


Our sobriety depends on the group. The group depends on us.



At first we go along because we have to...

Later we find a way of life we want to live.



We discover that we cannot keep this priceless gift unless we give it away. We will not survive unless we carry the AA message.



DISCIPLINE

In my pre-A.A. days I steadfastly refused to form habits - good or bad. My reason was that habits would interfere with my liberty. In the last terrible alcoholic years before my rebirth in this brotherhood of the second chance this, of course, meant interference with my liberty to drink when, where and what I liked.

Came the day when I passed through the doors of Queen Mary Hospital, Hanmer. There I learned for the first time that I was suffering from a disease called alcoholism and that this disease affected me in three ways - physically, mentally and spiritually and that I had to have treatment in all these departments if I was to get and to stay well.

Over the intervening years I have, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, begun to form habits of body, mind and soul which have helped to keep me sane and sober and functioning normally physically. But I realise that this process is only just beginning and that the time has come for a closer look at the situation in all three respects in so far as this alcoholic is concerned. I think the keynote has got to be self-discipline. In my drinking days I had completely lost conscious contact with the God of my understanding. True I had kept tenuous contact with the outward forms of my faith - Sunday Mass and a minimal observance of the Sacraments. I believe that over a long period of time I have undergone a spiritual awakening to the point where I am able to achieve conscious contact with God. There are long periods, though, of spiritual aridity. So I set aside the first and the last half hours of the day to spiritual reading, prayer and meditation. I need weekly reception of Communion and frequent devotional exercises.

I remember during my last weekly "interview" with our helpful ally at Q.M.H. asking him how

long he thought it would be before I returned to normal, mentally. He suggested it would be about two years. I can testify after five and a half years that this was a gross under-estimate. But what to do about it? I believe in the first place that all my thinking has to be tested against the norms of honesty, truth and charity. How often I find my mental processes do not measure up to these standards indicates my lack of progress in this area of recovery. This in turn is reflected in my speech to the extent that the test must become "Is it wise, is it true, is it necessary, is it kind?" This calls for a considerable amount of self-discipline for one so used to shooting-off his loud mouth, although I do think I can claim to have learned the value of silence without surrender.

Physically, I believe that some permanent damage has accrued from thirty years of drinking and that I can never be as fit as, say, the non-alcoholic of my own age. Certain precautions in this respect appear to be indicated. The trouble is there are so many lost years to make up and so little time left to do it. However, I think I can best help myself by the practice of "easy does it", setting aside each day two periods for complete relaxation and rest, some daily physical exercise, adequate and regular meals and a copious intake of fluids. I think a regular medical check-up is wise as is acceptance of the advice of the good Doctor who nursed me through the worst years of my drinking and has watched the subsequent years of my recovery.

Self-discipline is a new concept in my life but I believe it to be necessary for my future "day-by-day" sobriety and this I want above all else because the grim alternatives are the lunatic asylum or a premature grave.

Thomas á Kempis said it all 500 years ago:-  
 "Grant that our desires may become submissive to reason, our reason to faith and the whole man to God."  
 "SCRIBLEX"



THE FELLOWSHIP IS REAL

My story is much the same as other alcoholics, so I will get on with the subject I wish to discuss.

What I have in mind and never cease to be amazed at is the Fellowship in A.A.

Take for instance, a bloke rings a 'phone number in any town or city and says "My name is Bob and I am an insurance salesman from Timbuc-too" - he is liable to get a burst eardrum from the 'phone being slammed down at the other end. But let him ring the same number and say "My name is Bob and I am from an A.A. Group in Wellington," then the conversation will go something like this - "Come right over and have a cup of tea and a yarn." I had some experience of this about this time last year when I spent some weeks in Linton Camp. Calling at the A.A. rooms in Wellington I obtained the 'phone number of Ida in Palmerston North and on arrival there I spent a most enjoyable afternoon and evening with Ida's husband, David, and Ida, discussing A.A. From there I met May and her husband who collected me and took me to a meeting and introduced me to the group in Palmerston North and I was made very welcome by group members such as Ces, Leo, Jack and all the other members, also I spent a most enjoyable afternoon with Doug Mc. when he was publishing the "Mainstay" in Palmerston North, who even took me back to my quarters at Linton, as did a number of other A.A. members, after picking me up, taking me to meetings and then taking me back again, as I had no means of transport.

On leaving Linton to return home I called at the A.A. rooms in Wellington to thank them for the contact in Palmerston North. I was introduced to Bill off the 'S.S. Wanganella' and while standing on the wharf before sailing he introduced me to yet another A.A. member, Case, from Christchurch, and he and I filled in quite a time drinking coffee and talking A.A. experiences. This is truly the FELLOWSHIP OF A.A. FRED - GORE.

VISIT OF AUSTRALIAN A.A.

In September we had a visit from Fr. Michael K. of Sydney. He attended meetings from Auckland to Clyde, Central Otago. He spoke to nurses groups at 2 hospitals and visited Hanmer. He came for a well earned holiday from his work and it was his first visit to N.Z. He saw a good deal of our country on his way to and from A.A. gatherings. Enough we hope to bring him back again before too long.

He gave us good solid A.A. in plain understandable language; but not straight Aussie! The progress of the illness in him was no different to that of any of us. He went a long way down the road. Like most of us he had many friends who tried, as best they knew, to help him. In their ignorance they only helped him down the road. This is the great tragedy of alcoholism even today. It is estimated that 85% of alcoholics die untreated and many without knowing what is wrong with them.

A doctor, a recovered alcoholic came on the scene at the critical moment and he was sent to "Hydebrae" Hospital in Sydney which takes 30 alkies for treatment. The Matron told us he was the most serious physical case they ever had and for a time they despaired of his life. In that powerful setting he got the message, good and solid, and has been passing it on ever since.

Bill L-S of Christchurch just returned from Sydney reports that Fr. M. is planning an invasion of N.Z. next year with Dr. M. and 2 others. "N.Z. is no place for one poor A.A. to go on his own; they bullied me" said Fr. M.

We think we can work four Aussie A.A.'s too. Come on over.

Anon.

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A.A. . . . . A.A.



O P E N M E E T I N G

An open meeting was held in St. Stephens Church Hall, Ponsonby, on Monday the 5th October. Some 300 attended, amongst them, Ministers, Priests, Social Workers, Probation Officers, Magistrates and Doctors. A.A.'s came from Whangarei, Hamilton, Paeroa and Tauranga. There was a good representative assortment of Auckland A.A.'s of course.

Lindsay MacD. made a splendid job of chairing the meeting. Speakers included Arthur S., Charles S. and Kevin O'H. Our special thanks go to our Maori friend Charlie, who spoke straight from the heart and was magnificently honest and humorous. Fr. Michael, an A.A. from Sydney was the guest speaker. From many thoughts he left with us, here are a few quotations:-

".....the sickness of alcoholism is a major problem in our midst, it's one that we've got to face up to, and I believe the only way to face up to it is to bring it out into the open and expose the alcoholic to treatment - don't hide him; and he is being hidden today in private hospitals and homes .....I had the privilege of sitting with the man who founded A.A. for 5 hours and hearing him tell how this happened. He was, at the end of his drinking, a professed atheist; he had tried every possible way of getting his drinking under control except with God's help....when he at last called upon God to show Himself, he was immediately relieved of the need to drink.....he has no doubt whatever that God is the author of A.A. ....the extraordinary mystery of A.A. ....this is the mystery of A.A. that we, by sharing our experiences one with another, cease to want a drink. This not only happens to me but to anyone who wants it to happen for them ....."

(Full tape from Library, Box 160, Wanganui.)

FIRST  
THINGS  
FIRST



Step 2

THE SECOND STEP - FATHER MICHAEL  
(extract from tape of Fr.M's talk at Wgtn.)

The second step on the programme says 'We came to believe that God would restore us to sanity.' This means that we want the kind of sanity by which we can walk through tomorrow and every day from here on without taking another drink. This is a lovely sanity — to be able to get up tomorrow morning and not want a drink. To get up tomorrow morning and want your breakfast — it's a wonderful meal, I missed it for a long time. Not to want to drink — this is the thing. It's extraordinary not to be sweating tomorrow morning — not to be miserable and restless, not have all the sadness that this thing produces in us. God can restore us to sanity. These two steps are just sheer rationalisation, sitting down and working out the whole problem — we're powerless over alcohol — my life's unmanageable when I drink — God's in existence and God can restore me to sanity. Now the question arises 'Will I let Him?' I know that He can do it — will I let Him into my life to help me deal with this problem. I have to make a decision in the first step. I have had my last drink! This can kill you almost, you know. The awful fears that I suffer from here. How can I ever go back and live with people? How can I go back and say I don't drink? All the fears and dreads that come up about this and no-one was very upset at all! Most people shook me by the hand and congratulated me. A decision that brings us release. I believe this is the surrender step — the surrendering of our wills to God gives us a complete release from the compulsion and the desire to drink. God gave us free will and God can't get at us unless we make a decision. We are the only ones that can exercise our own free will. No one can make a decision about my will except myself — God can't do this. It wouldn't be free if He could. I did this many times and so did you alcoholics but how often did you keep it. This programme suggests we let God come in & help us keep it — then the thing is almost over.