

MARKINGS

c/o G.S.O.
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YOUR ARCHIVES INTERCHANGE

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EXCERPTS FROM "THE ARCHIVES" AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, SEATTLE - Part 2

Tom H.: "Perhaps you people are wondering how I got this job as moderator. Well, I kind of wonder myself sometimes, but it probably has something to do with the fact that I've been around a little bit for 34 years, 5 months and 29 days. No, no, at this kind of gathering all it means is that you are getting old. You know, I'd like to tell people just so you get some idea of where I'm coming from. I told my wife at my last birthday 'I don't think I look 70 do I?' she said 'No, you don't—but you used to.' We better move along. Here we've got another chap who has some very interesting information: Paul from California":

"My name is Paul and I'm an alcoholic. Before I start, I just want to say that I am very grateful to Seattle for their hospitality and for G.S.O. for putting this function on, since this thing is being taped, for all

of those who stayed at home to keep the flame burning, to make sure there is a place for alcoholics who are still suffering from alcoholism. Our Archival Committee began in the early 1980's. At that time, it was kind of a independent cowboy effort of a few interested people. The Archives Committee became part of San Diego Imperial Area Assembly. I was invited to participate at that time and was elected Chair of that committee. I did a lousy job so they re-elected me to get back at me. In true A.A. spirit, I might add and have been involved in it ever since. Right now the way our committee is set up it is staffed by G.S.R. and district committee members who are interested. Often, somebody gets pulled out for the Archives Committee and they say "But, I am not interested in the Archives Committee." So I say

"Tough, you're on the Archives Committee." Kind of like the Conference I think, so that is kind of fun. I wanted to mention to people that I did bring along a booklet called "The Story of Alcoholics Anonymous in San Diego County. There is a whole box of them up here that our Archives Committee dutifully put together in the last week to bring here to make available to all of you. Please come up and take as many of them as you wish and consider it a teaser for the 1995 International Convention which is going to be in San Diego. One of the things that our Archives Committee has been actively doing is taping the memories of long-timers. They love it! They love finding someone who is interested in the old days who will sit down and take the time to listen to them ramble on and sometimes give excruciating detail about what happened in the old days of A.A. and you can chew up a lot of old tapes that way. That has been fun because the long-term members themselves are the best source of other long-term members. Very often as you know, as they get older, their health goes, and they stay home and they do not want to drive at night and they don't like the smoke and the language and the drug addicts and so forth. I think one of the reasons that I was specially interested in that kind of thing I was raised by my grandfather so I am sensitive, or like to think I am, to those who are two generations older than I am. I am just very interested in the generation of people who founded A.A. So I like old-timers I like older people and I like spending time with them. One of the other things we did was to start a "Roots" meeting. It is an annual gathering of long-term members of 30-40 years plus. We get about a half dozen of them up on stage to talk for about 10 minutes
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Portable travel display taken to meetings & conventions in South Florida.
Submitted by Maureen M., South Florida Archivist

The origins of the Group Conscience:

So Bob and I reflected that late afternoon in 1937. "Missionaries, a chain of drunk tanks, and a book." Well, even by then, he and I began to learn that we were not the government of A.A. He, I guess more than I, already realized that the conscience of the group opinion, and in the groups interested could be better than our own. We'd better consult the folks.

There was a dear old non-alcoholic (and his wife), T. Henry Williams, there in Akron. They'd let us meet in their house after it got out of the Smith's parlor and got into theirs. And he was a great friend of ours. So, we called a meeting of the Akron Group—that is to say those who had stayed sober over any great length of time. I think for this particular meeting we scraped up about eighteen. That evening, Bob and I told them that we were within sight of success, that we thought this thing might go on and on and on. That a new light was indeed shining in our dark world. But, how could this light be reflected and transmitted without being distorted and garbled. At this point he turned the meeting over to me and, being a salesman, I set right to work on them drunk tanks and subsidies for the missionaries—I was pretty poor then—and we touched on the book.

Not Well Received

The group conscience consisted of 18 men, good and true and good and true men you could see, right away, were damned skeptical about it all. Almost with one voice they chorused, "Let's keep it simple. This is going to bring money into this thing. This is going to create a professional class. We'll all be ruined." I countered, "That's a very good argument. Lots to what you say. But even within gunshot of this very house, alcoholics are dying like flies. If this thing doesn't move any faster than it has in the last three years, it may be another ten before it gets to the outskirts of Akron. How in God's name are we going to carry this message to others? We've got to take some kind of chance. We can't keep it so simple

that it becomes an anarchy and becomes complicated. We can't keep it so simple that it won't propagate itself. And we've got to have a lot of money to do these things." Exerting myself to the utmost, which was considerable in those days, we finally got a vote in that little meeting and it was a mighty close vote. By just a majority of maybe two or three, the meeting said, with some reluctance "Well, Bill, if we need a lot of dough, you better go back to New York where there's plenty of it and you raise it."

The first search for money

Boy that was the word I'd been waiting for! So I scrambled back to the Great City and I began to approach some people of means, and describe this tremendous thing that had happened. It didn't seem so tremendous to the people of means at all. They said "What? 35 or 40 drunks sobered up. They have sobered up before now, you know. And besides, Mr. Wilson, don't you think it's kind of sweeping up the shavings? I mean, wouldn't something for the Red Cross be better?" In other words, with all of my most ardent solicitation, I got one hell of a freeze from the gentlemen of wealth.

Early despair

I began to get blue. And, when I begin to get blue, my stomach kicks up as well as other things. I was laying in the bed one night with an imaginary ulcer attack—used to have them all the time (I had one at the time the Twelve Steps were written) and I said, "My God, we're starving to death here on Clinton Street. By this time my house was full of drunks, they were eating us out of house and home. In those days we never believed in charging anybody for anything, so Lois was earning the money, I was being the missionary, the drunks were eating meals. "This can't go on! We've got to have them drunk tanks, we've got to have them missionaries, and we got to have a book—that's for sure."

Enter Leonard Strong

The next morning, I crawled into clothes, and I thought of my brother-in-law. He's a doctor. I went up to see

my brother-in-law Leonard. He pried out a little time between patients coming in up there and I started my awful belly-aching about these rich guys who wouldn't give us any dough for the great and glorious enterprise.

Leonard's idea, Rockefeller

It seems that he knew a girl and I think she had an uncle that somehow was tied up with the Rockefeller family and their charities. "If you want to, we'll call up the man and if he's alive and will see us. Would you like me to do that?" I hadn't tried the Rockefeller offices, so I said "Well, sure, give them a ring." On what slender threads our destiny sometimes hangs. Remember, my brother-in-law said, "I knew a girl and I think she had an uncle."

Enter Willard Richardson

So, the call was made. Instantly there came on the other end of the wire the voice of dear Willard Richardson, one of the loveliest Christian gentlemen that I have ever known. And the moment he recognized my brother-in-law, he said "Why Leonard, where have you been all these years?" My brother-in-law—unlike me—is a man of very few words, so he quickly said to dear old "Uncle Willard" that he had a brother-in-law who had some success sobering up drunks and could the two of us come over there and see him. "Why certainly," said dear Willard, "come right over."

The First meeting at Rockefeller's

We go over to Rockefeller Plaza, we go up that elevator, 54 flights—56 I guess it is—and we walked plunk into Mr. Rockefeller's personal offices. Asked to see Mr. Richardson and here sits this lovely benign old gentleman, who nevertheless had kind of a shrewd twinkle in his eyes. I sat down and told him about our exciting discovery, this terrific cure for alcoholics that had just hit the world, how it worked and what it had done for them. Boy, this was the first receptive man with money—or access to money—remember, we were in Mr. Rockefeller's personal offices at this

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each about the old days. Some of them laughed when they heard that 10 minute limit. I've had the privilege of chairing that thing when everyone on the podium was sober longer than I had been alive and I get to give the hook the way Tommy does. Tommy though just pulls on your coattail. I have to stand up and literally elbow them away from the microphone. Anyway, that has created tremendous interest and what has happened is other long-term members will come out of the woodwork to see their cohorts. At one of them there was a reunion of people who had not seen each other for 35 years. Very touching! You will have people actually bring archival things. We had a guy bring in a copy of *As Bill Sees It*, first edition, signed by the first A.A. member in our county. We had another guy bring in a bunch of old stuff and he didn't know what it was. Old meeting schedules, newspaper clippings from the 50's and a copy of Bill's monograph on Niacin. So that has been very valuable for us. The other thing that we also put together is a display. One of the things we did with our display was we got copies of old Grapevine articles from San Diego County. Just to let people know that have been contributing to the Grapevine from our area for a long time. That reminds me I wanted to ask Tom, do you have a subscription to the Grapevine? Yes. Yes he says okay, alright!! The other thing that may be of note to people is that our first meeting was on November 7, 1940. It was brought to our area by Hal S., a member who sobered up in Los Angeles in 1939. We have his copy of *A.A. Comes of Age* signed to him by Bill W. that one of our past delegates who's sitting out here, got us and graciously donated to the Archives. We have several first editions of the Big Book. We have a first edition of the *Twelve and Twelve*. One of the other interesting things about our area is that Bill's mother lived in San Diego for some time. So we have some correspondence from her. Another old A.A. member, Jim B., sobered up June of 1938 in New York and founded A.A. in Philadelphia. He

1990 HISTORY AND ACTIONS OF THE TRUSTEES ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

The Gathering Experience Proposal was approved for mailing in Mid-February. A number of specific corrections were made to the letter. It was also suggested that more space be allotted to the reply sections. Some method for supplying Canadian stamps for use by respondents in that country will be explored. Current and past Staff, Trustees and Delegates will be polled in this project. The subcommittee reported their observations on the suggestion to have a local archivist selected to participate in trustee Archives Committee meetings. The cost, difficulty in selection and the limited time of our meetings militated against such participation. Present input of local archivists appear adequate through correspondence and *Markings*, the archival newsletter. The subcommittee recommended that we prepare a biannual letter and questionnaire addressed to the needs of this body. A draft will be ready for the October meeting. A simplified wording for our Classifications used for our holdings was presented and approved. The following are changed:

General (material open to the public) will now be classified 'A'.

General material (available to A.A. members, under controlled conditions, with review and approval of the Archives Committee) is now classified B.

Classified material (with access requiring review and approval of the Archives Committee) is now classified "C".

Confidential material (not available to anyone for a specific time period or under special conditions) is now classified "D".

The Committee reviewed our policy against the use of video tapes of early timers for oral histories. The committee reaffirmed its' belief that such use would violate the letter and spirit of our 11th and 12th Traditions. Consequently, it was voted not to accept the video tape but to request again an audio copy thereof. The delegate Bobby B. would be asked to facilitate this request.

The Archives will copy 2 sets of minutes from the Conference, Trustee and Corporate Committees on archival paper.

The distribution of the *Washingtonian* paper by Milton Maxwell within the fellowship was reviewed. It was agreed that the trustees' Archives Committee would continue to send the delegates and trustees copies every other year. Others would be encouraged to send a \$9* contribution to cover duplication and postage. (*changed to \$10 by A.A.W.S.) It was decided that the main item on the January agenda would be a discussion of what role of the G.S.O. Archives could and should be in the years ahead.

became the agnostic noted in the story "The Vicious Cycle" in the Big Book and moved to San Diego in the Late 1940's after 13-stepping his wife. He lived in San Diego until his death in September 1974 and his wife, Rosa, died in May 1980. We have some correspondence between Jim and Bill from the late 40's about the ideas battling around about getting a General Service Conference started and so forth and that has been fascinating to see. We have some wonderful, wonderful holdings and one of the other things we did in

February was we had a thing called "The Celebration of A.A. History" in the area. One of the things we did was to tape a member who knew Bill. Actually, her good friend was Bill's sister Dorothy and she remembers Dorothy complaining to her about her drunken brother Bill. So she's been around a long time and later joined A.A. herself. We got to get her to reminisce on the tape a bit about how one of her sisters married Clarence and another sister married Hank P. One of the things she

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moment-and by now, too, we had learned that this was Mr. Rockefeller's closest personal friend. He said, "Why, yes, I'm much interested. Would you like to have lunch with me, Mr. Wilson?" Now you know, for a rising promoter, that sounded pretty good-going to have lunch with the best friend of John D. Things were looking up. My ulcer attack disappeared.

Spirits high, the lunch with Richardson

I had lunch with the old gentleman and boy, he's so warm and kind and friendly. Right at the close of lunch he said, 'Why now, Mr. Wilson-or Bill, if I can call you that-wouldn't you like to have a larger meeting with some of my friends? There's Frank Amos, he's in the advertising business, but he was on a committee that recommended Mr. Rockefeller drop the Prohibition business. And there's Leroy Chipman, he looks after Mr. Rockefeller's real estate. There's Mr.

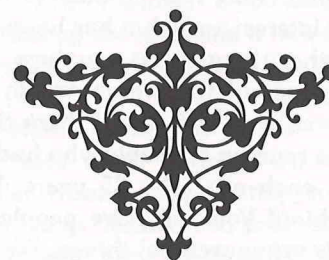
Scott, he's Chairman of the Board up at the Riverside Church.

The next meeting at Rockefeller's

A meeting was arranged and it fell upon a winter's night in late 1937. The meeting was at thirty Rockefeller Plaza. We called in-post haste-a couple of drunks from Akron-Smithy included of course. I came in with the New York contingent-four or five. To our astonishment, we were ushered into Mr. Rockefeller's personal board room-right next to his office. I thought to myself, 'Well now this is really getting hot'. Indeed I felt very much warmed when I was told by Mr. Richardson that I was sitting in the very chair that was just vacated by Mr. Rockefeller. I said, "Well now, we are really getting close to the bank roll." Old Dr. Silkworth was there that night too. He testified what he had seen happen to these new friends of ours. And these drunks-thinking of nothing better to say-each of us told our stories-the drinking and the

recovery. And these folks listened. They seemed very definitely impressed. So, I could see that the moment for the big touch was coming. I gingerly brought up the subject of drunk tanks, the subsidized missionaries and this question of a book or literature.

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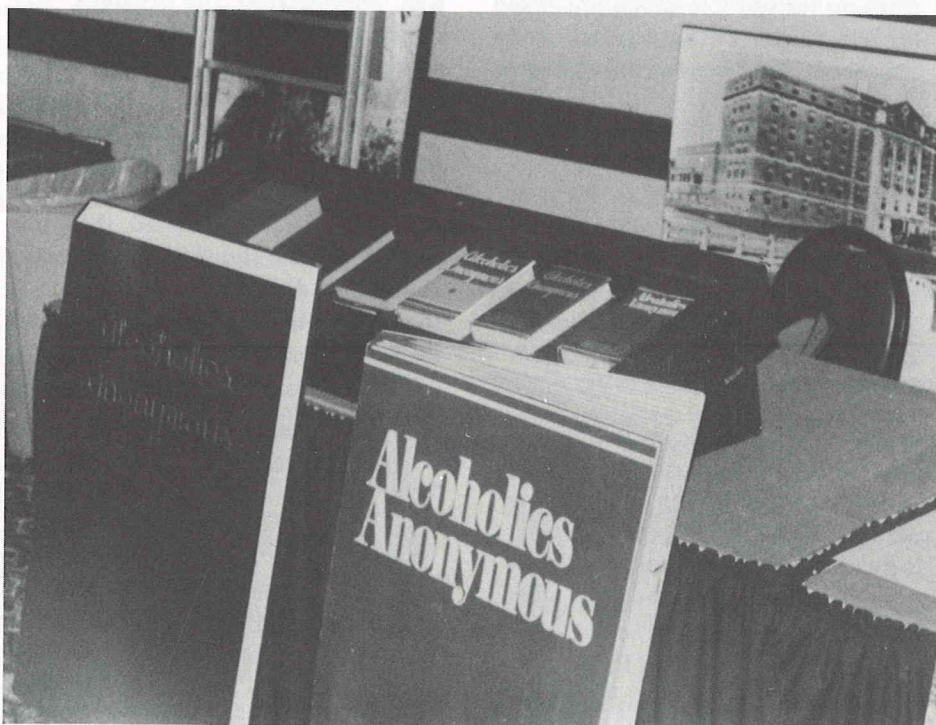


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donated to the G.S.O. is a first edition, first printing of the Big Book with signatures of the first hundred members and T. Henry and Clarence Williams, Dr. Tiebout and all those people. One of the things I wanted to mention was a very poignant thing for us. We went through quite an uproar about posthumous anonymity in our committee and our committee has affirmed a concept of what posthumous anonymity is about. We continue to respect posthumous anonymity. We don't believe in publishing the last names of dead A.A. members in our history. We believe that it confuses newer A.A. members about that and we see no particular mileage in doing that and we see it as unnecessary. Finally, I wanted to mention a line from a 1960 letter from Bill to Jimmy that we have a copy of. In it, Jimmy complained evidently that some of the old-timers were ignored at Long Beach in 1960 and Jimmy of course, just being 100 miles south couldn't understand why he wasn't given a bigger whoopla. Bill replied "You know Jim, you may complain rightly that you suffer from too little recognition, but, I can say with equal fervor that I suffer from far too much." Thank you."

To Be Continued



Center of picture shows the Big Book display case with 1st, 2nd and 3rd additions inside. Not shown are several 12x12's that can also be displayed. Large red placard on the left is replica of 1st addition Big Book, made by a Member of the Fellowship. Blue placard on the right is replica of 3rd addition. Submitted by Herb B., So. Minnesota Area Archives