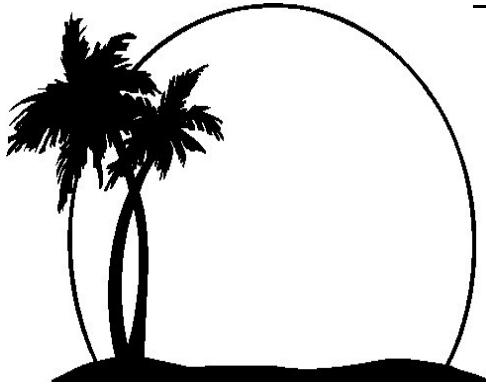


December, 2021

## Your Santa Barbara Central Office

Presents



# The Messenger

14 W. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 962-3332 [www.santabarbaraaa.com](http://www.santabarbaraaa.com)

## Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



**1** Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



**2** Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



**3** Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



**4** Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



**5** Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



**6** If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.



**7** Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



**8** Worship in your own way.



**9** Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



**10** Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember—"one day at a time."



**11** Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



**12** "Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

## The Manager's Corner

**BY TIM W.**

We have been going through some strange and scary times in the last two years. However, one thing has remained hopeful and true...if you don't drink you won't get drunk. And Alcoholics Anonymous works. Whether by Zoom, by telephone, by email, text, or safely distanced gatherings, this thing of ours holds up. And holds true.

Sometimes people will comment, seemingly in amazement, that people are getting sober who have never been to a “Real” AA meeting. But why shouldn’t they? They have had access to Zoom and the other methods I’ve mentioned.

I know that Bill W wrote of the Second World War soldiers who stayed sober through that conflict without the advantage of meetings. I know that there are what we refer to as “Loners” who have stayed sober by correspondence, and people locked in institu-

tions who have maintained sobriety under very difficult isolation. To me this all attests to the fact that it works.

With COVID, we have seen a new level of participation and commitment. We've all had to ratchet it up a notch knowing that, if we don't, we could be in trouble. And for me, this pandemic has brought a renewed sense of urgency and commitment to the need for doing all I can to insure that the message is being carried to the alcoholic who still suffers. Sometimes that calls for increased awareness and creativity, but you all have stepped up and delivered.

Hopefully, the next year will continue bringing us back together in a more personal way. Until then, we here at your Central Office wish you safe holidays.

-Tim

[illegible]

## Venmo for Central Office Donations

Your Central Office is now accepting Venmo donations. Scan the QR code below  
or search for: @SBCentralOffice

**IMPORTANT:** Please indicate what Group is making the donation or what individual member is making the donation



Scan QR Code for payment

# Member Submission

## ON THE ELEVENTH STEP

**BY DALTON E. (SAN LOUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA)**

I know I am a seeker. I wish I could say it's kept me out of trouble, but I'm guessing that's not the deal. So, here we are at the end of the year and I have charged myself with the task of seeking a dialogue, not a monologue like I am prone to doing, with my Higher Power.

Listening to the universe versus the typically self-centered will of my own is a serious challenge for me. I don't very often know what my Higher Power's will for me is, but I do know what it isn't, and from that I can discern plenty.

I have the power to carry out that will. I tend to believe and hope that I wouldn't be granted that power, confidence, and sincerity if I were not worthy. But every now and then when all my gears are turning and humanity is on the forefront of my mind, I get pleasantly surprised as cause and effect has time and time again given me a true north heading for my moral compass.

These acts of reliance are suggested to me, and ought to keep me from wasting too much energy navigating in the wrong direction.

—Dalton E. (A wayward sailor)

## Give A Gift to Your Sponsees This Holiday Season



*Call Your Central Office at (805) 962-3332 for more information.*

# On the Twelfth Step

"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."

## FREE TO EXPLORE

*A lifelong spiritual seeker gets sober and continues his search for a Higher Power*

**BY: JOHN M. (LAGUNA NIGUEL, CALIFORNIA)**

One of the many freedoms I have found in AA has been the freedom to have my own Higher Power. Prior to AA, while still in the depths of my disease, I was introduced to a sect of Buddhism. One of the reasons I was drawn to it, is that it seemed to work for me. After trying Buddhism, I found I had some prayers answered. I then pursued it with greater interest. It awakened in me some long dormant sense of spirituality.

The Buddhists were very kind to me and they allowed me to find my own path. At the time of my introduction to Buddhism, I was nearing the end of my drinking career, meaning I was pretty much unemployable. I was too unreliable to hold down a job and I always had a serious case of "bottle flu" on Mondays, as well as the need to leave early on any payday Friday. I was looking for answers to the question, "Why was my life such a mess?"

I had tried the religion of my youth but found that unsatisfactory for some reason. The people in the Buddhism I was involved with were very patient with me and told me I could pray for anything I wanted. I think I remember praying for a lot more booze.

As my life continued its serious downward spiral, I found myself getting food out of dumpsters at supermarkets. I would make my rounds of the dumpsters during evenings or late nights. One evening, as I approached one of my usual dumpsters, I found a homeless woman there ahead of me. I patiently waited for her to finish before I scavenged for my dinner.

Buddhism is very introspective (just like AA) and, as the lady rummaged in the dumpster, I experienced a moment of clarity. I saw myself—maybe for the first time—and what I had become. I saw myself waiting in line to get into a dumpster. Was this the best I could do? It was an out-of-body experience.

I returned home shaken and confused. I had been bragging to my friends how great my religion was, how I could pray for anything. Then someone asked, "If it's so wonderful, how come you have never prayed to get sober?"

That simple question kickedstarted a process for

me. Some months later, I said my version of a pre-newcomer prayer: "Please help me. I don't want to live this way any longer and I am willing to do anything." Had I known what "do anything" would mean for me, I might have hesitated.

That prayer got answered in relatively short order, and I found myself in a detox before I actually understood what a detox was. There, I was introduced to AA and the Steps. People told me I needed a Higher Power. Buddhism had brought me this far, I figured, so why switch? My process was slow but steady.

I continued in AA and Buddhism for about 15 years until I felt the need to leave organized religion. I felt like a newcomer. I said the Serenity Prayer in the morning. I continued to be active in AA and started work in a new career. I fell in love with the mountains and took up backpacking.

Then one summer, I read *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James and went on a solo backpacking trip. It was during that trip, alone in the High Sierra, that I found my Higher Power. Had I not read the William James book, I might have thought I'd had a psychotic episode up in the high altitude. But my experience fell generally in line with what others had experienced. So I concluded it was a valid human experience and I discussed it with my sponsor.

Since that time, I have enjoyed the freedom to explore many different religions, cultures and philosophies. I have had the opportunity to visit other countries and experience AA there. Once while I was in India at an AA meeting, we were saying the Serenity Prayer in a Christian Church in a Hindu country as the Muslim call to prayer wafted through the window. Now that's freedom and diversity!

My understanding and relationship with my Higher Power continues to grow and change as I stay sober and grow and change. Looking at it now, my spiritual journey in AA has been one of the most interesting and unexpected experiences of my life. Had AA been too restrictive in its interpretation of a Higher Power, I think I would never have been able to stay sober. I am so grateful to Alcoholics Anonymous and my agnostic sponsor, Forrest, who helped me find a "good orderly direction."

—From the November 2019 Grapevine



## November Birthdays

<u>Member</u>	<u>Years</u>
Connor I.	1
Trish A.	1
Robb M.	2
Jens A.	2
Ron S.	3
Carol S.	3
Darrell L.	3
Blake S.	4
Kyle S.	5
Jamal A.	5
J.P. G.	8
Kat	8
Alison G.	13
Vanae	14
John H.	15
Jay A.	20
Kimm S.	23
Rod	28
J.R.	31
Steve O.	32
Matthew D.	34

The Messenger is published by  
YOUR Central Office.

Please send submissions to:  
[manager@santabarbaraAA.com](mailto:manager@santabarbaraAA.com)

***Have an AA birthday? Please let  
your Central Office know so that we  
can print it in The Messenger.***

## Central Office Statistics

During November your Central Office had:

AA Info Calls	63
Alanon Referrals	0
Other Referrals	0
12 Step Calls	0
12 Step Office	1
Out of Town Visitors	6
Office Walk Ins	162
Website Pageviews	6,477

*"Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he tries to help his brother alcoholic, the one who is even blinder than he. This is indeed the kind of giving that actually demands nothing."*

# On Tradition Twelve

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

## OUR ANONYMITY IS BOTH INSPIRATIONAL AND SAFETY

### THE ORIGINS OF OUR TWELFTH TRADITION

Before writing the Traditions articles eventually published in the "Twelve and Twelve," Bill W., AA's co-founder, penned more than fifteen essays on the subject in the Grapevine. Distilling the wide-ranging, and often contentious (or fractious) experience of AA's first groups, these articles show how Bill and the Fellowship's thinking about the Traditions evolved, as well as offer new insight into why they are important today. The three essays reprinted here, including the landmark "Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition," provide a glimpse of the Traditions in the making.

The rest of Bill's articles on the Traditions can be found in Language of the Heart or in the Digital Archive, along with a wealth of essays by other early members of the Fellowship.

Discussing the subject of anonymity in a previous Grapevine article, I tried to make the following points--that anonymity has, for us AAs, an immense spiritual significance; that the principle ought to be preserved as part of our vital tradition; that since we have as yet no sharply defined policy there is confusion in some quarters as to what anonymity ought to mean; that we need, therefore, a perfectly clear tradition which all AAs would feel bound to respect. I also offered some suggestions which I hoped might become, after further discussion, the basis of a national policy on anonymity. These suggestions were:

1. It should be the privilege of each AA to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow AAs should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.

2. Conversely, the individual AA ought to respect the feeling of his local group about anonymity. If his group wishes to be less conspicuous in their locality than he does, he ought to go along with them until they change their views.

3. With very rare exceptions, it ought to be a national policy that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish, in connection with any AA activity, his name or picture in mediums of public circulation. This would not, however, restrict the use of his name in other public activities provided, of course, he does not disclose his AA membership.

4. If, for some extraordinary reason, a member

thinks it desirable to drop his anonymity locally he should do so only after consulting his own group. If, as an AA, he is to make a nationwide public appearance the matter ought to be referred to national headquarters.

If these suggestions, or variations of them, are to be adopted as a national policy, every AA will want to know more about our experience so far. He will surely wish to know how most of our older members are thinking on the subject of anonymity at the present time. It will be the purpose of this piece to bring everybody up to date on our collective experience.

Firstly, I believe most of us would agree that the general idea of anonymity is sound, because it encourages alcoholics and the families of alcoholics to approach us for help. Still fearful of being stigmatized, they regard our anonymity an assurance their problems will be kept confidential; that the alcoholic skeleton in the family closet will not wander in the streets.

Secondly, the policy of anonymity is a protection to our cause. It prevents our founders or leaders, so called, from becoming household names who might at any time get drunk and give AA a black eye. No one need say that couldn't happen here. It could.

Thirdly, almost every newspaper reporter who covers us complains, at first, of the difficulty of writing his story without names. But he quickly forgets this difficulty when he realizes that here is a group of people who care nothing for personal gain. Probably it is the first time in his life he has ever reported an organization which wants no personal publicity. Cynic though he may be, this obvious sincerity instantly transforms him into a friend of AA. Therefore his piece is a friendly piece, never a routine job. It is enthusiastic writing because the reporter feels that way himself. People often ask how Alcoholics Anonymous has been able to secure such an incredible amount of excellent publicity. The answer seems to be that practically everyone who writes about us becomes an AA convert, sometimes a zealot. Is not our policy of anonymity mainly responsible for this phenomenon?

Fourthly, why does the general public regard us so favorably? Is it simply because we are bringing recovery to lots of alcoholics? No, this can hardly be the whole story. However impressed he may be by our recoveries, John Q. Public is even more interested in our way of life. Weary of pressure selling, spectacular promotion and shouting public characters, he is refreshed by our quietness, modesty and anonymity. It well may be that he feels

*(Continued on page 7)*

## On the Twelfth Tradition (continued)

a great spiritual power is being generated on this account --that something new has come into his own life.

If anonymity has already done these things for us, we surely ought to continue it as a national policy. So very valuable to us now, it may become an incalculable asset for the future. In a spiritual sense, anonymity amounts to the renunciation of personal prestige as an instrument of national policy. I am confident that we shall do well to preserve this powerful principle; that we should resolve never to let go of it.

Now what about its application? Since we advertise anonymity to every newcomer, we ought, of course, to preserve a new member's anonymity so long as he wishes it preserved. Because, when he read our publicity and came to us, we contracted to do exactly that. And even if he wants to come in under an assumed name, we should assure him he can. If he wishes us to refrain from discussing his case with anyone, even other AA members, we ought to respect that wish too. While most newcomers do not care a rap who knows about their alcoholism, there are others who care very much. Let us guard them in every way until they get over that feeling.

Then comes the problem of the newcomer who wishes to drop his anonymity too fast. He rushes to all his friends with the glad news of AA. If this group does not caution him he may rush to a newspaper office or a microphone to tell the wide world all about himself. He is also likely to tell everyone the innermost details of his personal life, soon to find that, in this respect, he has altogether too much publicity! We ought to suggest to him that he take things easy; that he first get on his own feet before talking about AA to all and sundry; that no one thinks of publicizing AA without being sure of the approval of his own group.

Then there is the problem of group anonymity. Like the individual, it is probable that the group ought to feel its way along cautiously until it gains strength and experience. There should not be too much haste to bring in outsiders or to set up public meetings. Yet this early conservatism can be overdone. Some groups go on, year after year, shunning all publicity or any meetings except those for alcoholics only. Such groups are apt to grow slowly. They become stale because they are not taking in fresh blood fast enough. In their anxiety to maintain secrecy they forget their obligation to other alcoholics in their communities who have not heard that AA has come to town. But this unreasonable caution eventually breaks down. Little by little some meetings are opened to families and close friends. Clergymen and doctors may now and then be invited. Finally the group enlists the aid of

the local newspaper.

In most places, but not all, it is customary for AAs to use their own names when speaking before public or semi-public gatherings. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters were present they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program. This preserves the principle of anonymity so far as the general public is concerned and at the same time represents us as a group of alcoholics who no longer fear to let our friends know that we have been very sick people.

In practice then, the principle of anonymity seems to come down to this: With one very important exception, the question of how far each individual or group shall go in dropping anonymity is left strictly to the individual or group concerned. The exception is: That all groups or individuals, when writing or speaking for publication as members of Alcoholics Anonymous, feel bound never to disclose their true names. Except for very rare cases, it is at this point of publication that nearly all of us feel we should draw the anonymity line. We ought not disclose ourselves to the general public.

In our whole history not more than a handful of AAs have ever dropped their anonymity so far as the general public is concerned. Some of these instances have been accidental, a few have been quite unnecessary and one or two are apparently justified. Of course there must be few policies which cannot sometimes, in the general interest, be suspended. Yet any who would drop their anonymity must reflect that they may set a precedent which could eventually destroy a valuable principle. The exceptions will have to be few, far between, and most carefully considered. We must never let any immediate advantage shake us in our determination to hang on to such a really vital tradition.

Great modesty and humility are needed by every AA for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to AA as a whole. This principle of anonymity before the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attributes forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction and seldom, if ever, upon promotion.

—Bill W.

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