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# Synanon Cult influence on Alcoholics Anonymous, Addiction Treatment and the Criminal Justice System 1968-2017

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## A MINORITY REPORT TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCES

**Submitted:** 12.01.17 to GSO (Great Britain) for consideration as a topic for Conference 2018. Revised and re-submitted 22.04.17 and 15.05.17. Revised 28.12.17

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### Abstract

This report documents a brief history of the Synanon cult and its influence on Alcoholics Anonymous, addiction treatment and the criminal justice system. By drawing upon published research in the fields of addiction treatment, sociology, criminology, cultic studies, journalism, and government reports, this report examines the complex international relationships between the Synanon cult, Alcoholics Anonymous, the 'Therapeutic Communities' and 'Recovery' movements, and government agencies in the USA and UK. In recent decades there has been a proliferation of treatment centres which attempt to combine the Synanon based Therapeutic Community treatment model with Alcoholics Anonymous in addiction treatment. There has also been a proliferation of commercial enterprises which target A.A. members with products ranging from literature explaining the Twelve Steps, how to sponsor newcomers, and how to organise A.A. meetings, to novelty items such as CDs, bumper stickers, sobriety chips and key rings. Certain sectors of the addiction treatment industry have collaborated with government agencies to facilitate alcoholics to A.A. through treatment centres and courts. Despite the number of people facilitated to A.A. in recent decades, official A.A. membership estimates indicate overall A.A. membership levels have become static and may even have fallen. The attempt to integrate Synanon philosophy with Alcoholics Anonymous in addiction treatment may explain A.A.'s stagnant growth, public criticism of cult-like practices and reports of disunity in some areas of the fellowship in Great Britain. It may also explain A.A. discontinuing use of the Circle and Triangle trademark in the USA, in favour of commercial enterprises. In an age which has seen the development of highly sophisticated thought reform programmes which bypass psychological defence mechanisms, this report discusses how A.A. members, Conference Delegates, G.S.O. Staff and General Service Boards, might protect themselves, and the fellowship, against automatic compliance to professionally presented packages of 'mutual aid,' which in the long term benefit the vendors at the expense of the targeted population.

# Preface

## The Purpose of Filing a Minority Report

*“In the light of the principle of the ‘Right of Appeal,’ all minorities – whether in our staffs, committees, corporate boards, or among the Trustees – should be encouraged to file minority reports whenever they feel a majority to be in considerable error. And when a minority considers an issue to be such a grave one that a mistaken decision could seriously affect A.A. as a whole, it should charge itself with the actual duty of presenting a minority report to the Conference. In granting this traditional ‘Right of Appeal’ we recognize that minorities frequently can be right; that even when they are partly or wholly in error they still perform a most valuable service when, by asserting their ‘Right of Appeal,’ they compel a thorough-going debate on important issues. The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority”* (Extract from Concept V, The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service).

Acknowledgement is given to the A.A. members in the USA who assisted with providing information, for without certain sections of the report would not have been completed.

The international dimensions of movements within A.A. and in addition treatment suggest the subject of this report is a matter affecting A.A. as a whole. Therefore, this minority report is addressed to A.A. General Service Conferences worldwide.

If you are a recipient of this report and are an A.A. member resident outside Great Britain, it is suggested that you file this report to your national General Service Conference along with any information relevant to your locality.

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For those who are unfamiliar with the professional authors quoted and referenced in this report, a brief description is given here.

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**Daniel Casriel** was a psychiatrist instrumental in founding the first of the Synanon based Drug-Free Therapeutic Communities in America, Daytop and Phoenix House in New York, on which the American Drug-Free

(TC) movement is based. In the early sixties he studied Synanon in Los Angeles where he met Synanon's director of research Lewis Yablonski (Casriel, 1963:5) and Synanon's founder, Charles Dederich (Casriel, 1963:12). Casriel recommended that "*the Synanon system be studied and reproduced, preferably using Synanon members to seed new institutions that can then be modified to a greater or lesser extent to meet the situation and research design*" (Casriel, 1963:192).

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**Paul Morantz** is an attorney specialising in the prosecution of cults. During his investigation of Synanon, in 1978 he was bitten by a de-rattled rattlesnake which was posted through his mailbox by Synanon cult members.

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**William White M.A.** is Emeritus Senior Research Consultant at Chestnut Health Systems and a well known author in the field of addiction treatment. He has worked as a volunteer consultant to Faces and Voices of Recovery, the organisational centre of the Recovery Advocacy Movement since its inception (White, 2013:11).

The work of William White provided a major impetus in shifting UK government drug strategies toward an integrated recovery-oriented model of treatment in what has been described as “*a fundamental shift in policy in both Scotland and England toward a recovery perspective*” (Best et al., 2010:265). White describes himself as “*deeply entrenched in the philosophies of the therapeutic community and Minnesota Model alcoholism programs of the late 1960s and early 1970s*” (White, 2009).

**Barbara Wilkins** was a journalist and the Southern California Bureau Chief of People Magazine. She also had articles published in Los Angeles and Time Magazines.

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**Lewis Yablonski Ph.D.** was Professor of Sociology at San Fernando State College; married to an ex heroin addict Synanon cult member and served on the Synanon cult’s board of directors for ten years (Janzen, 2001:24). He also taught sociology at University of California, Los Angeles, and criminology at the University of Columbia and Harvard University.

**Rowdy Yates** is Senior Research Fellow and facilitator of the Scottish Addiction Studies group in the Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling; a former heroin addict, he formed a group of recovering addicts modelled on Yablonski’s description of Synanon in *Synanon: The Tunnel Back*, which became Lifeline, now one of the UK’s largest drug treatment agencies (Yates, 2011). He is executive director of EWODOR (the European Working Group on Drugs Oriented Research), Vice-President (Teaching & Research) of the EFTC (European Federation of Therapeutic Communities) and Chair, Addictions Advisory Group, Royal College of Psychiatrists (Community of Communities). In 1994 he was awarded the Order of Member of the British Empire (MBE) for services to the prevention of drug misuse.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

To understand the present social trends in Alcoholics Anonymous, and reasons for reports of disunity in some areas of the fellowship in Great Britain, (A.A. General Service Conference (GB) 2012, Committee 6, Question 2) it may be necessary to understand the origin and evolution of the Synanon cult and its influence on A.A. post 1968, evident in *AA Grapevine*, *The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous*. It may also be necessary to understand how Synanon philosophy was transferred to a mainstream addiction treatment model via the American Drug-Free Therapeutic Communities (TC) movement; how the TC movement has influenced government policies on addiction treatment and prison reform; how Oxford Group philosophy and Moral Re-Armament philosophy influenced both Synanon “religion” and the American TC movement’s philosophy; and how the TC movement’s policy change toward Alcoholics Anonymous has affected both A.A. and influenced government policies toward Alcoholics Anonymous and addiction treatment.

The American TC movement’s integration of Synanon philosophy with Alcoholics Anonymous in addiction treatment may explain A.A.’s lack of growth in recent decades. There is some confusion over the term ‘Therapeutic Community.’ American Synanon based Drug-Free Therapeutic Communities, also known as Concept TCs and Concept-based TCs (Yates, 2003; Vandavelde et al., 2004) have different origins, methods and organisational structures when compared with European Therapeutic Communities, which existed before the advent of American Therapeutic Communities (Broekaert et al., 2000; Vandavelde et al., 2004; De Leon, 2000:12). For the purposes of this report and to avoid confusion with European Therapeutic Communities, the terms TC, TC movement, Synanon TC, Concept TC and Concept-based TC are interchangeable and refer only to the Synanon based American Drug-Free Therapeutic Communities movement, which has spread to Europe and beyond.

Synanon began in 1958 as a drug rehabilitation programme which evolved into one of USA’s most notorious destructive cults, (Hassan, 1990; Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980; Ofshe, 2000; Singer, 2003; Langone, 1995; Morantz, 2013, 2015). The cult spread across the United States and into Europe and Asia (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:148). Synanon’s thought-reform program, also known as brainwashing, coercive persuasion (Ofshe, 2000:892) and mind control (Hassan, 1990) was subsequently replicated by psychiatrists and former Synanon members in the late sixties and became the basis for a mainstream addiction treatment model in the USA, via the American Drug-Free Therapeutic Communities (TC) movement. (De Leon, 2000; Broekaert et al., 2000:411; White, 1996:233; Deitch, 1999). Ex-addicts spread the American TC model to Europe, Asia, South Africa and Australia (Broekaert et al., 2000:411). The Synanon TC also developed as a model for correction of criminals in prisons (Yablonski, 1967:333; Vandavelde et al., 2004). According to Janzen, “*The Legacy of Synanon lives on in a number of venues. Synanon continues for example, to have significant impact on drug rehabilitation and prison reform via the ‘therapeutic communities’ (TC) movement. Many Synanon people, now employed as TC counselors, continue to adhere to the foundation’s confrontational, peer-counseling approach to drug addiction*” (Janzen, 2001:2).

The pressure of Synanon’s influence for change in Alcoholics Anonymous was recorded in *AA Grapevine* in 1968, under an editorial entitled “*Winds of Change*” (AA Grapevine, 1968); more recently, the pressure of Synanon’s legacy may be seen in the 2014 Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) General Service Conference. The conference topic for discussion being: “*Can the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations on how we can respond positively to the recovery agenda and external initiatives in the professional community?*” These external initiatives being led in the UK by Mark Gilman (AA Service News, Winter, 2013:5, Summer, 2014:3), who was Strategic Recovery Lead at the UK government agencies National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse, Public Health England, and



Through the Prison Gate at NHS England. According to Gilman, he has long been inspired by the work of American psychiatrist George De Leon (White, 2011:6); De Leon is a former Synanon group participant (De Leon, 2000, xvii; White, 2010) and a pioneer of the American Drug-Free TC movement (White, 2010). De Leon's publication of *The Therapeutic Community Theory, Model and Method* in 2000 replicates much of the Synanon cult's language, theory, model and method, including use of encounter group confrontation, hierarchical pyramid structure, system of rewards and degrading punishments, coerced open confession, "graduation", "act as if", "haircuts", "carom shots" and "marathons" (De Leon, 2000:293,120,225,278,81,220,275). According to De Leon, "The confrontation makes use of mixed tools, eg., humor, engrossment and carom shots, which reduce resistance to listening, while provocative tools, eg., anger and hostility, may be elicited for defiant or persistent resistance" (De Leon, 2000:295). "The TC provides moral and ethical boundaries and expectations for personal development; it employs potential banishment, positive reinforcement, shame, punishment, guilt, example and role modelling to coerce personal change and development" (De Leon, 2000:27). "Signs may be worn by the resident, strung around the neck or pinned to the shirt. These display what the resident must remember concerning infraction. Typically, the themes center on a social label (e.g. liar, thief, manipulator) and what they must do to change (e.g. speak respectfully, listen, stop reacting, or threatening people)" (De Leon, 2000:225).

It appears that Alcoholics Anonymous has been influenced by the TC movement's change of policy toward A.A. after the TC movement failed in its attempts to rehabilitate drug addicts who were also alcoholics. This policy change involved attempting to integrate the Synanon TC with Alcoholics Anonymous in addiction treatment.

According to Deitch, "One of the most significant areas of change involves TC policies towards alcohol and the TC relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other community-based support groups. Dederich, Synanon's charismatic founder, deliberately distanced Synanon from AA and NA. Early members of the TC movement had no idea of the history, Steps, and traditions of these fellowships. Some early TCs developed drinking privileges that could be earned as one matured within the TC. But the reality was that alcoholism began to degrade and kill ex-addicts within the TC community who had influence, energy, and promise as future TC leaders. There was also a larger schism in the field in how alcoholics and opiate addicts were viewed — stereotypes that kept the fields separate for a number of years. Coming to grips with alcohol as a TC issue and moving toward integrated treatment of multiple drug dependencies occurred at a time the TC was trying to define itself amidst powerful outside influences" (Deitch, 2010).

According to De Leon, key developments in contemporary TCs for addiction include "reintegration of AA 12-step principles and traditions into the treatment protocol of many residential TCs" (De Leon, 2000:25). This integrated treatment became known as the "Recovery Model" (Lescende, 2009), an attempt to combine two incongruent methods into treatment, leading to mistreatment (Lescende, 2009). According to the findings of a 10 year study of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, the dominant social and scientific attitudes toward integrating A.A. and N.A. within formal healthcare systems poses a significant threat to the future of both fellowships unless A.A. and N.A. members can resist these trends (Zafiris, Lainas, 2012). It appears the TC movement's change in policy toward Alcoholics Anonymous has made the Synanon cult as much part of contemporary A.A. history as it is the foundation of the American Drug-Free TC movement.

## Chapter 2

# Synanon Cult influence on Addiction Treatment and Alcoholics Anonymous

### 2.1 The Synanon Cult Origin

The Synanon cult was founded by Charles Dederich, also known as Chuck Dederich, an alcoholic who joined A.A. in Los Angeles on May 14, 1956 (Casriel, 1963:18). According to Dederich, he was “a salesman and a fair-to-middling standup comic” (Wilkins, 1976). However his welcome in A.A. in Los Angeles was short-lived, as recalled by Dederich himself in 1963: “When the meeting started and I began to speak, I would go on for hours without stopping. In the beginning the members enjoyed it. I went from one AA meeting to another every night. That’s all I did. I combed the area around Los Angeles to find a meeting each night of the week. I’d arrive late in the afternoon and wait hours for the meeting to begin. I was the first one to speak, and I’d speak all night unless they stopped me. I guess I hogged the meetings, and my welcome grew thin. They finally told me to shut up or get lost. I couldn’t shut up. Though I couldn’t speak at meetings any longer, I became known as a good speaker and was called on by outside audiences to give lectures on AA and Alcoholism” (Casriel, 1963:18). Dederich recalled that in January 1957, “I had given up speaking activities but started to pay more attention to individual alcoholics.” “I would pick up alcoholics and have dinner with them, and maybe go on to a meeting; but mostly I would go to the clubhouse and we would have a small meeting” (Casriel, 1963:18). In June 1957, Dederich relocated to Santa Monica, California, where he became involved with A.A. there. He became unemployed and worked voluntarily for a Twelve Step House (Casriel, 1963:21). In August 1957, Dederich took part in a University of California experiment researching the effects of L.S.D. and alcoholism along with several other volunteers from the A.A. chapter to which he belonged. After taking two doses of L.S.D. Dederich described himself as being left with “feelings of omnipotence and omniscience” (Casriel, 1963:20). Dederich stopped going to A.A. meetings shortly after, retiring to his apartment to read, but he continued to go on A.A. house calls (Casriel, 1963:20). He was influenced by Emerson’s essay on “Self Reliance” (Casriel, 1963:19). His study on philosophy and psychology included Freud, Thoreau, Lao-tse, Buddha, St. Thomas, Catholicism, Plato (Yablonski, 1967:48), Skinner, Maslow, and later, the brainwashing techniques of Mao (Morantz, 2013:96; 2015:86).

The pre-Synanon movement started around February 1958, when some alcoholics that Dederich knew began to visit him in his apartment (Casriel, 1963:21). In March 1958, Dederich set up a Wednesday night “free association” discussion group in his apartment to explore “a line of no line”(Yablonski, 1967:49).

According Dederich, there were “some interesting discussion groups on philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and sociology” (Casriel, 1963:22). “Because most of the people had some psychoanalytic orientation, the early sessions were focussed around sexual problems. Some of the group had analytic couch work. Our language was psychoanalytic, and there was much ten-year-old kid talk. It was loud, dirty, and wild” (Yablonski, 1967:49). “We also held meetings which were forerunners of Synanons” (Casriel, 1963:22). “The meetings were loud and boisterous. Attack of one another was a keynote of the sessions, with everyone joining in. I could detect considerable lying and self-deception within the group. I began to attack viciously – partly out of my own irritations and at times to defend myself” (Yablonski, 1967:49). “The first meetings were non directive; they were a la AA. I felt though they were limited and really of no value... ...After the third or fourth meeting, it became apparent the meeting took on a different quality when I maintained stout and rigid control. I became the inquisitor and leader of the group. I began to demonstrate the mechanisms and methods of ridicule and cross-examination and to demonstrate the paradox in which you can

*never really do wrong without having some right in it and you can never do right without having some wrong in it. There is no such thing as right and wrong, there is only in between. However, for practical purposes a thing is right at one time and wrong at another time. I demonstrated this by a powerful manipulation of the people present; they used to attack me, but they never won*” (Casriel, 1963:21). *“The disaffiliated group of about seven men and six women increasing looked to Chuck for leadership”* (Yablonski, 1967:50). According to Dederich, *“A cult started to form around me within a month”* (Casriel, 1963:21).

In May 1958, the first drug addict joined the group who then brought in other drug addicts. Over several weeks attendance rose to about thirty; the disaffiliated group now meeting in Dederich’s apartment three times a week, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays (Casriel, 1963:22). Dederich and the group also started going to the Saturday night A.A. meeting in Santa Monica (Casriel, 1963:26). Dederich’s apartment became known as “the club house;” beside the loud and boisterous meetings, there was also loud music; Dederich’s landlord complained about the noise (Casriel, 1963:22). On July 14 1958, the disaffiliated group opened up a clubhouse, renting a storefront in a run-down amusement park in the heart of a beach slum area of Santa Monica, an area with drug traffic, and named it “T.L.C.” (Tender Loving Care) (Casriel, 1963:22-23). The original idea was for the venue to serve as a social club (Casriel, 1963:23). However, addicts moved in to live in the storefront, including some women (Casriel, 1963:22). According to Dederich *“sex was all over the place. I neither encouraged it nor prevented it”* (Casriel 1963:23). Dederich took on responsibility for the club’s finances (Casriel, 1963:23). By the end of July, Dederich became aware that something unusual was happening in that some addicts were staying off drugs for periods of time (Casriel, 1963:23). Dederich decided that he would work on addicts thereafter (Casriel, 1963:24). In August 1958, Dederich decided to incorporate the club (Yablonski, 1967:52; Casriel, 1963:25). According to Dederich, *“Incorporation needs more than one man, so the people I put on the board were those addicts and alcoholics that were around. I chose those who would do as I told them to do. I needed dummies I could control, but I didn’t want to make it so obvious as to put, for example my son on the board of directors, and I didn’t want put somebody on that would be frightened or rebel against what I would do, like some non-addictive persons I might have known”* (Casriel, 1963:26).

About Mid-August 1958, Dederich separated his activities from A.A. completely. According to Casriel *“Within a fairly short period of time, the alcoholics began to either drift away or complain. Many of the alcoholics felt that Chuck and his organization were going further and further away from AA principles – which they were. Addicts, on the otherhand, began to be attracted to the club by word of mouth”* (Casriel, 1963:25). According to Dederich, *“One of the alcoholics who helped me establish the storefront and whom I considered my partner instituted a ‘palace revolt.’ He got some older alcoholics together and they confronted me about the manner in which I, with most of the addicts’ backing, was handling things. I won – and threw the alcoholics out. I thought they were cluttering up the place by being self-centered and not thinking in terms of the group as a whole. They were too financially tight; they’d put ten cents on the mantelpiece and then consume all the food and drink – literally gallons of coffee. Synanon couldn’t afford them. Also, they were preoccupied with salvation, spiritualism, and God. I was trying to run Synanon as a social scientist and psychiatrist would. I didn’t like the strong religious overtones. I felt Synanon didn’t need serenity; we had too much work to do. So I told the alcoholic to get lost. Not all of the alcoholics left – Hank stayed with me and has been here ever since. Until this time we had been going to the AA meetings on a Saturday night. At this point, Synanon and AA parted company completely. We, at Synanon started our own Saturday night meetings and gradually added to them by using Synanon philosophy”* (Casriel, 1963:25-26).

According to Yablonski, *“With an influx of drug addicts and with Dederich leaning in their direction, a battle welled up between the addicts and some of the members of A.A. “The break with Alcoholics Anonymous occurred about the middle of August,” Chuck said. “It happened right in the middle of an A.A. meeting. Our whole gang had taken over the Saturday-night meeting of the Santa Monica A.A. group at Twenty -sixth and Broadway and built it up from its attendance of ten people to an attendance of about forty-five or fifty. There was some objection on some issue by the members of the Board of Directors of the A.A. club. I recall the leader stopping the meeting. They didn’t like us. The alkies didn’t like the addicts, and they didn’t like me in particular, because, among other things I had been through an L.S.D. experience. I had committed the unpardonable sin – I had taken a drug. In fact, I had even participated in an alcohol experiment up at U.C.L.A. So they didn’t like me up there, and they didn’t like my gang because they were mostly addicts. They made things difficult for us. I remember getting up in the meeting and saying, ‘All right, let’s go home - the hell with this.’ So the whole meeting got up, and we all got into our automobiles and came down to the club, and we never went back to A.A. again. We were building something new and different. Although I will always be grateful to A.A. for helping me personally, Synanon has nothing to do with A.A., any more than a rowboat compares with an airplane. We have a live-in situation, with family characteristics. We emphasize self-reliance rather than dependence on a higher being.” The complete break with A.A. threw all Dederich’s weight*

and energy into Synanon, on the side of the addicts: “After incorporating, and the break with A.A., I began to lay down the law. We were a Californian corporation, and we had to be law abiding. The very fact of our existence as a corporation said it was doing something. We assumed a responsibility; we had to get up the rent, we had to feed the people when they came in, and so on. This was the point at which the few alcoholics in the club began to fall out. They didn’t want any responsibility. They were afraid of it. In fact, it was even verbalized. ‘We don’t want to do this; we want to have a lot of fun; we want to have a club as a club.’ The alkies began to say, ‘Well, it’s our club,’ and I said, ‘No, it’s my club.’ I became the champion of the addicts, chucked the alcoholics out, and Synanon was then fully launched for addicts” (Yablonski, 1967:54-55).

The club incorporation papers were received by Dederich on September 18, 1958; according to Dederich “*The Synanon Foundation was formed that day in the storefront*” (Casriel, 1963:25), as a non-profit corporation (Yablonski, 1967:55). Of the alcoholics who were members of Dederich’s disaffiliated group in 1958, only one remained in Synanon in 1963 (Casriel, 1963:22). Of the early addict members, most were not in the club by August 1959; for one reason or another they had left (Casriel 1963:32). By 1959, Synanon had attracted both positive and negative reaction from the local community. In May 1959, local authorities found that people were living in the storefront without proper sanitation and fire-prevention facilities; the storefront was condemned as a place of residence and Synanon was forced to move out (Casriel, 1963:33). Dederich secured a lease on another building in a middle class area on the Santa Monica Pacific beachfront which was formerly used as a National Guard armoury; on August 18, 1959, about 40 Synanon members moved into the new premises (Casriel, 1963:34). On August 28, 1959, Synanon was cited with five violations of codes having to do with operating a hospital (Casriel, 1963:36). After a two month trial, Synanon was ordered to vacate the building by May 10 1960 (Casriel, 1963:36-37). Dederich refused the order to vacate the building and offer of probation if he moved from the neighbourhood (Morantz, 2013:97). Instead he was sentenced to 60 days gaol (Morantz, 2013:97), of which he served 25 days (Yablonski, 1967:68). Positive and negative publicity surrounding Synanon attracted public sympathy from some quarters, Dederich became something of a public martyr, attracting both financial and political support of the rich and famous (Morantz, 2013:97). Governor Edmond G. Brown, Sr. pushed through a bill exempting Synanon from licensing laws (Morantz, 2013:97). On September 6 1962 Synanon was dubbed “*The Miracle on the Beach*” at the United States Senate by Senator Thomas J. Dodd, then Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee to investigate Juvenile Delinquency (Yablonski, 1967:74, Casriel, 1963: Prologue).

In Synanon, according to Yablonski “*The individual is, in a fashion, “brainwashed” to give up his deviant pattern*” (Yablonski, 1967:261). According to Dederich, “*We use brainwashing and attack therapy here to peel away those parts of the self that haven’t been too effective*” (Yablonski, 1967:367). In 1963, Synanon received one million dollars in cash donations, goods and services; local merchants were contributing \$5,000 worth of goods and services to Synanon each month (Yablonski, 1967:399; Casriel, 1963:38). By the mid Sixties Dederich had begun to shift the focus of his operations away from brainwashing addicts to brainwashing middle class Americans without addiction problems, in the process building Synanon’s business corporations (Ofshe, 1980:111-112; Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:292-293). At this time, Dederich prevented addicts from moving to the final stage of the programme (Deitch, 1999:793). In 1968 Synanon formally abandoned the idea of rehabilitation, Dederich insisting that “*A person with this fatal disease will have to live here all his life. I know damn well if they go out of Synanon they are dead*” (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:146,147). By 1976 Synanon was the USA’s second largest supplier of promotional specialities, with assets worth \$22 million (Wilkins, 1976).

During the 1970s Synanon became increasingly paranoid and violent, finally closing down in the USA in 1991 after law enforcement investigations into beatings, child abuse, and Dederich’s conviction of conspiracy to commit murder (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980; Morantz, 2013, 2015). In 1977, Dederich declared a ‘Holy War’ on the media and, for a period of time, media coverage of Synanon was suppressed by a campaign of litigation (Singer, 2003:232). Dederich established a paramilitary force known as the ‘Imperial Marines’ and stockpiled Synanon with weapons, believed then to be the largest purchase of firearms in Californian history (Morantz, 2015, 2013:113). This prompted FBI investigation (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:105). The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sued Synanon for \$55 million in back taxes, forcing Synanon into bankruptcy (Morantz, 2013:155,156; 2015:618). The IRS did not liquidate Synanon corporations in order to seize assets, Synanon people persuaded IRS personnel to allow the corporations to continue operations (Janzen, 2001:241).

In the late Seventies, at the time Synanon was being exposed as a corporate cult, Dederich returned to drinking alcohol, justifying this by claiming that he had been advised by a Synanon doctor that a glass of wine might be good for his heart. In 1978 Dederich changed Synanon’s policy on alcohol consumption, initially allowing its use for ceremonial purposes, which soon extended to parties in the 1980s. One witness reported that he was drinking

up to two quarts of Chivas Regal per day by 1980, another that he was drunk too often during the 1980s (Janzen, 2001:153,154,182, 206).

In 1978, Dederich was arrested on charges of conspiracy to murder attorney Paul Morantz. *“TV crews had been present for the arrest, and the footage was extraordinary. There was Dederich – the reformed alcoholic who had supposedly developed a miracle cure for alcoholics and addicts – being carried out on a stretcher dead drunk. Synanon’s attorneys, in fact, insisted Dederich was too drunk to understand the charges against him. The next day Dederich would be arraigned in a hospital room where he was being sobered up, the judge agreeing that the Synanon founder was in no shape to be hauled into court”* (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:225). Dederich and two other Synanon members pleaded no contest to the charges made at the conspiracy to murder trial 1979-1980 (Morantz, 2013:138; Janzen, 2001:182). Dederich was fined \$10,000 and placed on a five-year’s probation, avoiding a custodial sentence due to an *“assortment of physical and psychological problems”* (Janzen, 2001:183). He was later diagnosed with a bi-polar, manic depressive personality (Janzen, 2001:216,244). After having several strokes beginning in the 1980s, he died of cardiorespiratory failure on 28 February 1997 (Janzen, 2001:244; New York Times, 1997).

Although in its early years, Synanon claimed a 90% 3-month success rate for rehabilitating addicts (Casriel, 1963:166), Dederich would not release records, stating that *“I am not interested in statistics”* (Casriel, 1963:164) and that *“As of now, the percentage of the people who come here and of those who remain is not published. I have the data, but I won’t release them to general public attention. It might present a rationalization for newly arrived addicts and might interfere with their potential success in Synanon”* (Yablonski, 1967:398).

According to Ofshe, *“Very little is dependably known about how much success this supposed rehabilitation program ever achieved. But this minor point did not prevent the program from being lauded in several books (Casriel, 1963; Yablonsky, 1965 and Endore, 1968), dozens of professional and popular magazine articles and thousands of newspaper articles (Schwarz, 1979). It was defined as a cure for drug addiction (Casriel, 1963), a break-through in criminology (Yablonsky, 1962, 1965, 1971), “a man-made miracle on the beach in Santa Monica” in the United States Senate (Yablonsky, 1965: 74), and according to Time magazine, a program that was 80% successful (Time, 1963, 1968). That high praise vastly over-stated Synanon’s success, to say the least. According to the organization’s figures, between 6,000 and 10,000 people lived in Synanon from 1958 to 1968. Apparently only about 65 people were ever rehabilitated, by completing the program and electing to graduate to life outside of the community (Kobler, 1969). Others who successfully completed the program were absorbed by the organization and induced to remain with it in the capacity of low paid staff”* (Ofshe, 1980:110-111).

According to Morantz *“Eventually, on the subject of rehabilitation, Ofshe would write, Synanon was “the failure that’s gave birth to an industry”* (Morantz, 2012).

## **2.2 Transfer of Synanon philosophy to mainstream addiction treatment**

The transfer of Synanon philosophy to mainstream addiction treatment began with the founding of two drug rehabilitation facilities, *Daytop* in 1965, and *Phoenix House* in 1967, in New York. These served as models for most Drug-Free TCs in USA and Europe (Broekaert et al., 2000:411).

### **2.2.1 Daytop Lodge/Daytop Village**

Daytop was founded as a replicate Synanon programme in 1965 by psychologist Alex Bassin, who was research director of the New York Supreme Court of Kings County and lead psychologist for the Brooklyn Department of Probation; Joseph Shelley, Chief Probation Officer; and Monsignor William O’Brian, a catholic priest and proponent of Synanon philosophy, who had helped David Deitch found a number of Synanon branches on the East coast (Broekert et al., 2000:411; White, 2010; Deitch, 1999:792; Casriel, 1963:4). After initial problems with drug use and discipline among the probationers on the programme, ex-Synanon members were called in to help. Casriel recommended Deitch, a former director of Synanon’s Westpoint facility to Daytop. Deitch then directed the Daytop programme, beginning by putting the inmates on a 16 hour meeting and having their heads shaved (Deitch, 1999:793). Deitch also helped Daytop expand TCs to Italy, Sweden, Greece, Eastern Europe, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Latin America and some Indo-European countries (Deitch, 1999:799). Three years earlier, in 1962, psychiatrist Daniel Casriel had discussed New York’s drug problem with Alex Bassin and Joseph Shelley, whereupon they agreed a new approach must be found; Casriel left New York to visit Synanon’s facility in Los Angeles in search of a new treatment, where he met with Charles Dederich and sociologist Lewis Yablonski, then research director of Synanon (Casriel, 1963:5,12). A year later in 1963, Casriel published a glowing report of what he found in Synanon in his book

*So Fair a House: The Story of Synanon* stating that “I am convinced that the Synanon approach offers the only breakthrough to date in the treatment of the drug addict.” And that “I strongly recommend that the Synanon system be studied and reproduced, preferably using Synanon members to seed new institutions that can then be modified to a greater or lesser extent to meet the situation and research design” (Casriel, 1963:191). Bassin and Shelly also visited Synanon and embraced it as an answer to New York’s growing drug problem (White, 2010; Deitch, 1999:792).

### 2.2.2 Phoenix House

Phoenix House was founded as a replicate Synanon programme in 1967 by psychiatrists Efrin Ramirez and Mitch Rosenthal (Deitch, 199:794; Broekaert et al., 2000:411). Ramirez had been recruited by the Mayor of New York to be the city’s first so called “*addiction czar*” (Deitch, 1999:794). In his development of New York’s drug treatment Ramirez began to rely on Deitch for help (Deitch, 1999:794), also asking George De Leon to help develop Phoenix House (Deitch, 1999:794). De Leon was a Synanon participant in New York (De Leon, 2000: xvii) who had contacts in Synanon and Daytop (White, 2010). Deitch had recommended Rosenthal to Ramirez; Rosenthal had previous contact with Charles Dederich and Synanon in Oakland California, where he had been a US Navy psychiatrist. He had been impressed by Synanon and started a TC programme in a US Navy hospital. Deitch sent staff from Daytop to help set up a Phoenix facility in New York (Deitch, 1999:794). Other ex-Synanon members were also brought in; two staff from Rosenthal’s navy hospital TC, and another who had approached Deitch looking for work (Deitch, 1999:795).

### 2.2.3 First Generation Synanon TCs in USA

According to George De Leon, “*In the period 1964-1971, TC programs were rapidly spawned directly and indirectly from Synanon and Daytop Village (including Gateway House, Gaudenzia, Marathon House, Odyssey House, Phoenix House, Samaritan House, and Waldon House). These and other first generation American TC programs were literally seeded or designed by members of one of the ‘parent’ programs, directly transmitting common elements of the philosophy, social organization, and practices from the original programs to the contemporary TCs*” (De Leon, 2000:15). Odyssey House, founded by Dr. J. Densen-Gerber was the outcome of David Deitch helping her conduct “*Marathons*” in Flower and 5th Avenue hospitals (Deitch, 1999:794).

### 2.2.4 First Generation Synanon TCs in UK

The first Phoenix House opened its doors in London in 1969, opening more facilities in the 1980s. It has since re-named to Phoenix Futures, a national organisation with nearly 90 services across community, prison and residential settings (Phoenix Futures, 2014).

According to Yates, “*In 1968 Dr Ian Christie, returning from a visit to New York, converted a ward of St James’ Hospital, Portsmouth (the Pink Villa Huts, later to be renamed Alpha House) into the UK and Europe’s first concept based or Synanon-style therapeutic community. Within a few years, Professor Griffith Edwards of the Maudsley Hospital Addiction Unit had established the Featherstone Lodge Project (later Phoenix House) in south London. Also around this time, Dr Betram Mandlebrote (see above) created a concept-based TC in Littlemore Hospital, Oxford. Later, like Christie, he moved his creation out of the hospital and into the wider community. Later in the 1970s, Dr Walter Lyons, enthused by his experiences at Odyssey House, New York, began a community called Inward House in Lancaster in the north of England. Significantly, all of these developments were, at least in part, the result of the enthusiasm of a group of progressive psychiatrists, most of whom had been charged with the running of a hospital-based ‘drug dependency unit’ and were inspired by their contact with American TCs (notably, Phoenix House and Daytop Village) to do something quite different*” (Yates, 2003:241).

“*For a short period in the 1970s, these communities enjoyed unparalleled influence in the development and direction of treatment approaches across the whole spectrum of services. . . . of more immediate interest to the sociologist is the remarkable ease with which a quintessentially American approach to treatment and rehabilitation was integrated into the UK drug treatment system*” (Yates, 2003:239). “*The concept-based therapeutic communities had an extraordinary impact upon treatment practices and beliefs in the UK, and one that far outweighed their relative input in terms of actual client contact*” (Yates, 2003:241).

In addition to TCs set up by psychiatrists, a group of five heroin addicts, among them, Rowdy Yates, founded a Synanon based TC in 1970, based on the description of Synanon’s methods in the book *Synanon: The Tunnel Back*, by

Lewis Yablonski; they set up Lifeline, now one of the UK's largest drug treatment agencies (Yates, 2011:18). Lifeline Project, a registered charity founded in 1971, "currently provides a diverse range of services including recovery and peer mentoring, harm minimization, day programmes, prescribing and shared care, community detoxification services, criminal justice and prison initiatives, family work and services for young people. . . . Currently delivering around 75 services or contracts, we support a workforce of 692 staff, over 250 volunteers, and increasing numbers of peer mentors. Our income is generated via grants and local contracts and a variety of small local or specialist scheme funds" (Lifeline Project, 2014).

According to Yates, "In the world of drug-free therapeutic communities, George De Leon is the nearest thing we have to a Pope! . . . . Last year I chaired a working party for the Royal College of Psychiatrists (Community of Communities Project) to develop a set of service standards for drug free therapeutic communities. During that time, De Leon's book was absolutely invaluable and rarely left my side" (Yates, 2011:18).

Mark Gilman worked for Rowdy Yates at Lifeline for 14 years, where he became Lifeline's Research Director (White, 2011:3). According an interview with William White in 2011, Gilman said that "I have long been inspired by the work of George De Leon. It was in the work of George De Leon that I first came across the notion of Recovery Oriented Integrated Systems (ROIS)" (White, 2011:6). "I am a great believer in the therapeutic power of employment, paying your own way, and (borrowing from George De Leon) 'living right'" (White, 2011:5). "When I started with Lifeline, they had a turnover of about £200,000. Today, this is nearer £20 million" (White, 2011:5). "Ian Wardle [Lifeline Project's current Chief Executive Officer] arrived in the late 1980s and became Chief Executive in the early 1990s. Rowdy, Ian, and I all remain good friends to this day" (White, 2011:4).

## 2.2.5 Second Generation and Contemporary Synanon TCs in USA

Since the 1960s the Synanon based Drug-Free TC movement has proliferated, diversified, and largely evolved toward mainstream health agencies (De Leon, 2000:4,26). In America the many facilities operating residential programs for teenagers based on the Synanon TC have been labelled "*The Tough-Love Teen Industry*" (Szalavitz, 2006). Descendants from first generation TCs include The Seed and Straight Inc. (Szalavitz, 2006:35). Following disturbing reports of federal funding for unethical treatment in experimental behaviour modification programmes, a Congress committee inquiry led by Senator Sam Irving presented a report to Congress in 1974 entitled "*Individual rights and the Federal Role in Behavior Modification programs*", finding that The Seed had used methods "similar to the highly refined brainwashing techniques employed by the North Koreans in the 1950s" (Szalavitz, 2006:21-22). A WTVJ News film documentary of The Seed reported "*The founder and director of the seed is Art Barker. He has no credentials to speak of. He was a stand-up comedian in a night club at one time, and during that career became an alcoholic. Art Barker at forty seven is not a psychologist, but he adapted from the Alcoholics Anonymous program he entered eleven years ago, a new hope for an entire generation of youngsters destined to spend their formative years caught up in a nationwide drug craze. Art Barker is a fanatic about his rehabilitation program...*" (WTVJ News).

The Seed programme ran from 1970-2001 (Szalavitz, 2007). After the Seed programme received bad publicity arising from the Irving report, Straight Inc. was co-founded in 1976 by a Bush family friend, Mel Sembler and was initially staffed almost entirely by former 'seedlings' and their parents (Szalavitz, 2007; Szalavitz, 2006:23; Sembler, 2014). Straight Inc. claimed to be based on the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps (Szalavitz, 2006:64) and was backed by Nancy Reagan as her "favorite" programme (Szalavitz, 2006:8). It closed in 1993 after facing seven-figure legal judgments for beatings and kidnapping of adult participants (Szalavitz, 2006:64). A victim support group called *Surviving Straight Inc.* also documents the abuses that occurred in Straight Inc. and verifies that "*Straight, Inc. (1976-1993) publicly claimed to rehabilitate teenage drug users by using tough love and Alcoholics Anonymous principles*" (Surviving Straight Inc., 2014). Abuse in contemporary Synanon TC programmes has given rise to the founding of victim support groups such as *Campaign for Ethical Treatment of Youth* (CAFETY) and *Alliance For The Safe, Therapeutic & Appropriate Use of Residential Treatment* (ASTART).

Contemporary Synanon based TC programmes include addiction treatment, education, wilderness, boot camps, 'Christian' and behaviourist programmes (Szalavitz, 2006, 2007). Thousands of allegations of abuse and reported deaths in residential programmes for teens (Congress, 2007) led to congressional inquiries and to the introduction of the bills *H.R. 1981: Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2013* and *S. 2054: Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2014* (GovTrack.US, 2014). According to Szalavitz, "*The scope of the problem is difficult to document. It is hard to know exactly how prevalent the tough love philosophy is and how common its most extreme forms are - but University of California sociologist Elliot Currie, who has studied teen residential programs, says the view is so pervasive that he cannot "confidently" say that he knows of any*

programs which are not influenced by it” (Szalavitz, 2006:4). The Hazelden Foundation for example, a well-known drug rehabilitation facility and external influence on A.A., whose ‘Minnesota model’ has dominated discourse on contemporary recovery and spirituality in recent decades (Dosset, 2013:373) began using the Synanon “*Tough Love*” TC model in the late sixties and extended it to all of its facilities through the 1970s; it claims to have given up confrontation by 1985, having “*found a better way*” (White & Miller, 2007).

Claims by TCs to have given up confrontation however, need to be taken in consideration with De Leon’s publication of *The Therapeutic Community Theory, Model and Method* in 2000. According to White & Miller, “*A 2001 study on staff attitudes toward addiction treatment found that 46 % of those surveyed agreed that “confrontation should be used more” and a 2004 ethnographic survey of adolescent addiction treatment in the United States commonly encountered programs that were “explicitly designed to demean and humiliate*” (White & Miller, 2007). Where such programmes attempt to blend Synanon TC philosophy with Alcoholics Anonymous, and moreover, publicly declare the name Alcoholics Anonymous in their advertising, this appears to have a very detrimental effect on some patients and on Alcoholics Anonymous. For example, Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre (AARC), Canada:

The following are transcripts from a CBC News, documentary, filmed in 2009: “... *Just like everything else, it was to break me down, and it worked. I um, I died. The last part of me that fought, didn’t fight any more. It didn’t even occur to me that it was wrong.*” “*For [S. . . .] as well, healing started only after AARC, and with professional help. In the program he was told without a life-time commitment to the Twelve Steps, he was headed for jail, and institution or death. Fourteen years later he works a steady job and is very much alive.*” “*I haven’t been to an AA meeting in over nine years. I’ve proven them wrong. I’ve gone and done something with my life. I’ve done a lot of good. I’m a good person.*” “*But for some of them it is still a day to day struggle, to accept that they are not the life-long addicts AARC convinced them they would be. Today [B. . . .] is a professional care giver and a mother who says she can handle the occasional drink just fine. What she can’t handle are the dreams she says, still haunt her twelve years later.*” “*I was damaged in there, emotionally my spirit was damaged, and, you know, that takes a long time to get over it. I don’t like even you know, talking about AARC. It’s fearful. They put the fear of God into you, and that’s not something anyone has to live with. And, yeah, that’s damaging, to me, that’s damaging*” (CBC News, 2009).

According to Szalavitz, the programme employed by AARC is almost identical to that of Straight Inc. (Szalavitz, 2006:60). According to AARC’s website, the programme offers “*Twelve Step facilitation including Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)... .The stages have corresponding AA/NA steps that our clients learn in order to gain daily living coping skills... .AARC supports clients in their integration into AA and NA groups by hosting biweekly AA meetings at the centre*” (AARC, 2015). The adverse publicity for Alcoholics Anonymous also extends to Wikipedia, “*Treatment in AARC is based on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous*” (Wikipedia, 2015a).

According to the Alcoholics Anonymous East Canada Regional Forum 2010, “*Some attendees said the problems that A.A. groups have in failing to connect to newcomers is a Twelfth Step issue. One attendee mentioned that detoxes and other treatment facilities have preempted a lot of Twelfth Step work formerly done by A.A. members.*” (East Canada Regional Forum 2010, Final Report, workshop report: “*What Are We Doing to Keep Prospective Members from Coming Back?*” p. 3).

## 2.2.6 Synanon and first generation TC influence on Alcoholics Anonymous

In 1968, Synanon and Daytop’s influence on A.A. was recorded in *AA Grapevine, the International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous*. In several articles under an editorial titled “*Winds of Change,*” the editors reported “*growing pressure within the fellowship to find new ways of resolving emotional and spiritual problems*” amidst “*exciting ferment today in the fields of psychiatry and psychology*” (AA Grapevine, 1968,a). The upbeat articles reporting: “*From the East Coast and the West Coast come separate reports of a new kind of small, intense AA meeting, not confined to AA members, but including anyone who will abide by the rules of the meeting... .The quintessence of the new kind of meetings is the “marathon”... .Evidently the idea for these comes most directly and recently from the programs for narcotics addicts called Synanon and Daytop... .The climate of Synanon and Daytop, as best one can tell from reports and from minimal direct exposure, is much closer to the tone and intention of the fifth chapter of AA’s Big Book than are most AA meetings today... .Thus the marathon - forty hours of continuous meeting with a five-hour sleep-break halfway through...*”(AA Grapevine, 1968,b). “*...Small groups of five or six, laying it on the line with each other. Nothing held back, a real eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation...*” (AA Grapevine, 1968,c). “*...The leader continues, “The one basic rule of this meeting is that we stick to the principle of rigorous honesty with ourselves and with each other. There are twenty-three hours in the day for being nice. In this hour, we drop that...*”



(AA Grapevine, 1968,d). The content of the editorial and articles were subsequently criticised in following editions of AA Grapevine: “...which found in them a kind of harking-back to AA’s beginnings in the Oxford Group.” (AA Grapevine, 1968,e).

Among the critics, a former A.A. General Service Board Trustee who wrote: “...Any investigation of AA history or of Bill’s written and spoken words would have elicited the historical fact that it was because of the “Absolutes” of the Oxford Group that Bill realized very early in AA that “open confession” and Absolute Truth, Honesty, etc. could not, would not work for the alcoholic. It was on this very issue that AA in its formative days split from the Oxford Group, and Bill is the first to say that without this split we would not have survived. Clearly, the writers of these two articles have read a different AA history and different AA literature, and have had different experiences - indeed, they appear to have heard a different Bill W. than I have... ... Many have tried, but none have yet succeeded in rewriting or reilluminating the original wordings and intentions of the Twelve Steps as set down by Bill W. It is not surprising to hear this record, played again... ...I, therefore, find this kind of spiritual arrogance out of place in an official AA magazine which is read by vulnerable newcomers. It is even possible that many of them and many of us still find our main “hang-ups” quite solvable within the framework of the AA program if we truly and continuously remain a viable part of its mainstream” (AA Grapevine, 1968,e).

A Canadian member wrote: “I bought three copies of the March Grapevine to send to some friends who are not members of AA. I changed my mind after reading the “Winds of Change” articles, and decided the garbage can was the best place for the issues... ...Why not give a name to all the groups so described: “Sick, Sick, Sick Groups.” In my opinion the “winds of change” are blowing straight from an open sewer” (AA Grapevine, 1968,f).

These articles and others relating to Synanon, spanning a period 1968-1975 can be read in full in Appendix A

### 2.2.7 Synanon “Religion”, TC philosophy and Oxford Group nostalgia in A.A.

During the period 1964-1968, Synanon began to shift focus of its operation and formally abandoned the idea of rehabilitating addicts in 1968 (Deitch, 1999:793; Morantz, 2013:97; Ofshe, 1980:111; Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:146,147). Synanon began recruiting middle class Americans without addiction problems, in the process, developing its business corporations (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:146-147). During 1968-1969 the Synanon corporation distributing advertising gifts and specialities grossed \$1.2 million (Ofshe, 1980:113). Synanon’s movement away from rehabilitating addicts, together with the influx of non-addict members and growth of its business corporations caused problems with Synanon’s tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:149). In an attempt to protect its tax-exemption, Synanon declared itself a church in 1975 (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:150; Ofshe, 1980:113). Synanon’s lawyers attempted to justify religious status by outlining the “Synanon Religion” (Janzen, 2001:107), suggesting that Synanon’s belief system had Judeo-Christian roots in the Oxford Group Movement (Janzen, 2001:107), as well as “Emersonian transcendentalism” and “Thoreauan naturalism” (Janzen, 2001:107). A Synanon lawyer suggested that Synanon could claim a direct line of descent from the Oxford Group via its defection from A.A. (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:213). In its application for religious status Synanon claimed to have been a church since at least 1969 (Ofshe, 1980:113). The Oxford Group nostalgia demonstrated by Synanon influenced A.A. Groups in A.A. Grapevine in 1968 appear to support this. Synanon’s application for religious status was rejected by the IRS in 1981 (Janzen, 2001:214).

The Oxford Group and Moral Rearmament influence was of great importance to the American Drug-Free TC movement. (Broekaert et al., 2000:414). According to De Leon, “Frank Buchmann and Dr. Samuel Shoemaker, and Episcopal clergyman at Calvary Episcopal Church in New York (headquarters of the Oxford World Movement), were influenced by the Quakers and Anabaptists, who were also precursors of the Mennonites and Amish. These early religious influences on the Oxford Group and AA appear as elements of the modern TC” (De Leon, 2000:15).

### 2.2.8 Therapeutic Communities, Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Cult Phenomenon

Therapeutic communities emerged as an addiction treatment method at the same time as there was a burgeoning of the Cult Phenomenon in the USA (Ottenburg, 1982:151). According to Ottenburg, “Among those attracted to cults are persons who, dependent on drugs and without control or direction in life, readily succumb to a cult as a means of salvation. For these young people the cult is an alternative form of treatment, chosen - or acquiesced to - in preference to conventional therapies, or after these treatments have failed. To this extent, therapeutic communities, like established religions, are in competition with cults for the same members. Since some elements of organizational

*structure, methods of operation, and even stated purposes of some cults and some therapeutic communities may appear to be similar, it is important to distinguish between the two and delineate the significant differences that separate them*” (Ottenburg, 1982:151).

According to Singer, *“Since the 1960s there has been a burgeoning not of governments but of independent entrepreneurial groups that go into the mind - manipulation and personality - change business. Myriads of false messiahs, quacks, and leaders of cults and thought – reform groups have emerged who use Orwellian mind – manipulation techniques. They recruit the curious, the unaffiliated, the trusting and the altruistic. They promise intellectual, spiritual, political, social, and self-actualization utopias”* (Singer, 2003: xxvii). *“In the past, cults have gained a foothold by attracting the so-called marginal people – the unaffiliated, the disenchanting, the disgruntled of each generation. But today’s cultic groups have so professionalized their approaches and techniques of persuasion that they are moving well beyond the fringe and into the mainstream. They want you”* (Singer, 2003:6). *“Despite the myth that ordinary people don’t get sucked into cults, it has become clear over the years that everyone is susceptible to these master manipulators. In fact, the majority of adolescents and adults in cults come from middle-class backgrounds, are fairly well educated, and are not seriously disturbed prior to joining”* (Singer, 2003:17).

According to Lalach, *“There are cults, for example, that focus their recruitment activities in drug-rehabilitation programs, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other twelve-step programs, as that milieu tends to be a ripe hunting ground for potential members”* (Lalach, Tobias, 2006:91). *“In cases where alcohol or substance abuse was or is a problem, attending meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous may help. However, we caution you to proceed into the 12-step world with your eyes open and your antennae up. Despite its successes, this is an area rife with abuses and incompetencies. Hustlers use 12-step programs as a hunting ground for income and glory. Some counselors and group leaders are not credentialed. Some programs are fronts for cults. Even a well-meaning program may inadvertently promote long-term victimization. Although these groups are set up to reduce codependency, many participants become completely dependent on their 12-step meetings and friends”* (Lalach, Tobias, 2006:194).

It is unclear when the American Drug-Free TC Movement changed its policy toward Alcoholics Anonymous by attempting to integrate Synanon TC treatment with Alcoholics Anonymous. However, it appears to have already been implemented in The Seed (1970-2001) and Straight Inc. (1976-1993). Both programs claimed to be based on the Alcoholics Anonymous programme, corrupting the principles of steps four and five as a means of extracting forced confession from inmates (Szalavitz, 2006:27,34,35,39,64). The Synanon TC was integrated into Hazelden’s Minnesota Model in the late sixties-1986. (White & Miller, 2007). A survey examining the changing relationship between Therapeutic Communities and 12-Step programmes, published in 2012, found that of the 67 TCs sampled, 90% reported having 12-Step meetings on their premises, 21% reported the inclusion of 12-Step meetings beginning in 1980 or before, *“More than one respondent admitted to tampering with the format of 12-Step meetings in order to tailor the discussion to the specific needs of the population”* (Troyer et al., 2012:178,179).

In 1976 the American Therapeutic Communities (TCA) held a planning conference in which TCs claimed to have emerged *“from ancient forms of apostolic movements, the moral temperance movement and AA”* (De Leon, 2000:27); the Therapeutic Communities’ claimed direct descent from A.A. coming through Charles Dederich and Synanon (Ottenburg, 1982:157). According to Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc., by 1980 there were *“a number of ‘modern’ A.A. oriented treatment facilities encouraging patients to go through the first five Steps of the A.A. program before they were released- a procedure not much different from what the first group was doing in 1935.”* (A.A. World Services Inc., 1980:102).

In the 1980s there was a series of backlashes against the treatment industry in the USA, against fraudulent and exploitative practices, unethical marketing practices, excessive fees, misdiagnoses, inappropriate lengths of stay and inappropriate readmissions (White, 1996:236). Workers with long tenure began leaving the field, voicing their concern that the field has lost touch with its historical values, identity and spirituality; corrupted into a product for commercial distribution (White, 1996:237).

Where treatments were affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous, this also caused a reaction against Alcoholics Anonymous. According to historian Ernest Kurtz:

*“Under the umbrella afforded by civil rights legislation, the “Hughes Act” of 1970 and additional laws passed in 1973 and 1978 sought to aid alcoholics by moving public policy, if not attitudes, toward understanding alcoholism as a disability meriting the same consideration as others. These acts broadened and in some cases mandated opportunities for treatment, and a new industry soon sprang into being. Early A.A. had made use of “drying out” facilities. Following Dr. Bob Smith’s example, members from the beginning sought hospital admission for the medical detoxification of those who needed such care. Over time, halfway houses emerged for the more severely impaired, and*

*a few treatment settings developed - usually carefully nonmedical - staffed and supported by members of Alcoholics Anonymous who undertook these efforts largely for the sake of their own sobriety, as a part of their Twelfth-Step work. When the new laws broadened funding for treatment, a slow evolution in practice became a mad race for money. What had been largely a labor of love - and in some settings remained so - became in others mainly a way of making money, as wider cultural awareness and legislatively mandated insurance coverage combined to create a fruit ripe for plucking. Critics pointed out that the consistent bane of spirituality, greed, seemed to guide many who now clothed their projects in Twelve-Step language. A.A. applied the pragmatic phrase 'whatever works' to staying away from the first drink. Some of the new treatment providers applied the maxim to developing new 'products' and manipulating diagnoses. Before long, some who worked in treatment found themselves queried more often about 'the bottom line' than about 'quality sobriety.' Many of the most effective, those most experienced in spiritual service, moved to other settings or even other fields. Before long also, some funders of care - governments, companies, insurers - began to suspect that they were being defrauded. Reacting against the abuses, some began to view all recovery programs as rip-offs, rejecting anything that smacked of the Twelve-Step programs with which they associated this experience"* (Kurtz, 1999:16).

Another factor contributing to the backlash against A.A. was that the Twelve Steps had been adapted over 400 times to address problems other than alcohol. According to White, the explosive growth of the culture of recovery had enormous cultural visibility. *"There were times in the 1980s when it seemed like everyone was going into treatment and that the whole world was going to belong to some Twelve Step offshoot"* (White, 1996:236).

In the early 70's TCs had begun collaborating in order to take united action in matters of common interest; in 1975 forming a loose federation of TCs in USA and Canada called *Therapeutic Communities of America (TCA)* (Ottenburg, 1982:154). In 1976 the *National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA)* and the TCA funded the first TC planning Conference to deliberate and clarify the nature, purpose and agenda of TCs as a treatment method for substance misuse (De Leon, 2000:26; Ottenburg, 1982:154). The conference provided official federal recognition of the TCA and marked an important step in the evolution of the TC from an alternative treatment to major human service modality (De Leon, 2000:28). The conference was unable to decide a single definition for a TC due to a wide diversity of programs, but some common elements were established which provided the basis for defining contemporary TCs (De Leon, 2000:27; Ottenburg, 1982:155).

By 1976, the similarities between some American TCs and cults raised international concerns at the World Conference of Therapeutic Communities, a section of the *International Council on Alcoholism and Addiction*, held in Sweden. According to Ottenburg, comparison between the descriptions of methods, organisational structure, and stated purposes of American TCs and cults *"fits many cults and many therapeutic communities equally well"* (Ottenburg, 1982:153). *"Structures and practices significant in both therapeutic communities and cults have common roots in the long tradition of sects, communes and utopian communities that go back to antiquity"* (Ottenburg, 1982:158). *"Approaches described by some American programs made some European colleagues uneasily mindful of organizational style and practices remembered from youth movements under totalitarian governments. They expressed their deep conviction that the danger of misusing the power of the community under a charismatic leader might outweigh any positive results expected of the program. They questioned the extent therapeutic effectiveness depends on authoritarian and charismatic leadership in a therapeutic community, and how safeguards against misuse of power can be built into the system"* (Ottenburg, 1982:169). In 2000 a study comparing the similarities and differences between European Therapeutic Communities and American Drug-Free Therapeutic Communities found that *"Only if the communities are open to permanent questioning will it be possible to distinguish between education and indoctrination, between cults and therapeutic communities, and between charismatic and contained leadership"* (Broekaert et al., 2000:412).

## **2.2.9 Therapeutic Communities "Back to Basics" Movement**

The transition of the American Synanon TC from a marginal to a mainstream addiction treatment modality created an identity crisis within the TC movement and a paradoxical threat to its future: *"the success, acceptance and modification of the TC approach contain a paradoxical threat - the loss of its unique self-help identity as it assumes the role of a mainstream public health entity"* (De Leon, 2000:393). Attempts to define the TC caused concern within the movement about the TC's identity. Participants in first generation programmes tended to resist formal definitions of the TC. Most contemporary TCs however, recognised the need for definition as they had largely evolved toward mainstream health agencies (De Leon, 2000:26). By 1982 the need to define the TC had become more urgent because Synanon had become recognised as a cult and American TCs were subject to criticism from

European professionals working in the addiction field specifically with regard to the similarities between American TCs and cults (Ottenburg, 1982:151).

In 1989, a *“world institute on the TC convened in New York City, where over 300 registrants were directed to devote more than three full days addressing the theme “Back to Basics”* (De Leon, 2000:26). The wide diversity of contemporary TC programmes made it difficult to evaluate their general effectiveness and to define them (De Leon, 2000:5) thereby raising a call for training in TC basics (De Leon, 2000:6). *“The nonrecovering professionals who became involved in the TC movement were committed to the self-help concept and maintaining the purity” of the TC program model* (De Leon, 2000:23). Successive generations of paraprofessional staff, who had recovered in TCs, learning by apprenticeship and oral tradition (De Leon, 2000:5) became *“quite removed from the original roots of the TC approach. This has contributed to a progressive weakening in the application of clinical methods and tools of the TC and laxity in maintaining the structure of the traditional program. In response there has been a call for training in the ‘basics’ of the TC ”* (De Leon, 2000:6). Additionally, *“There are increasing numbers of conventional professional staff (social workers, nurses, psychologists, etc.) working in TCs. Based on their education and professional training, they introduce various concepts, language, and methods that often counter or subvert the fundamental self-help features of the TC”* (De Leon, 2000:6).

### 2.2.10 Recovery Model

The TC movement changed its policy toward Alcoholics Anonymous after it failed in its attempts to rehabilitate drug addicts who were also alcoholics. According to Deitch, *“One of the most significant areas of change involves TC policies towards alcohol and the TC relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other community-based support groups. Dederich, Synanon’s charismatic founder, deliberately distanced Synanon from AA and NA. Early members of the TC movement had no idea of the history, Steps, and traditions of these fellowships. Some early TCs developed drinking privileges that could be earned as one matured within the TC. But the reality was that alcoholism began to degrade and kill ex-addicts within the TC community who had influence, energy, and promise as future TC leaders. There was also a larger schism in the field in how alcoholics and opiate addicts were viewed — stereotypes that kept the fields separate for a number of years. Coming to grips with alcohol as a TC issue and moving toward integrated treatment of multiple drug dependencies occurred at a time the TC was trying to define itself amidst powerful outside influences”* (Deitch, 2010).

According to De Leon, key developments in contemporary TCs for addiction include *“reintegration of AA 12-step principles and traditions into the treatment protocol of many residential TCs”* (De Leon, 2000:25). This integrated treatment became known as the *“Recovery Model”* (Lescende, 2009), an attempt to combine two incongruent methods into treatment, leading to mistreatment (Lescende, 2009).

According to Lescende, *“Chemical dependency Treatment is, too often, Miss-treatment. This is a legacy from its beginning. For, the first treatment “centers,” were not centers at all. They were Therapeutic Communities. Therapeutic Communities began as a grass-root effort to treat addicts, mainly heroin addicts, that did not blend into the culture of Alcoholics Anonymous, and other 12-Step groups. Ironically, much of their language, and practices, are still being enacted in modern Treatment Centers. Even in Treatment Centers that claim to adhere to an AA/NA 12-Step-based model of treatment.*

*This came to be because of an attempt to jumble two incongruent philosophies: the philosophy, of the Therapeutic Communities (T.C.), and the philosophy of the Twelve Steps Fellowships. To truly understand how this came to be, a brief history of the substance abuse treatment field is necessary...*

*...This story reveals the significant differences that exist between the 12-Step programs, and Therapeutic Communities. Differences that have become blurry. They became blurry when a new kind of treatment centers emerged. These treatment centers, unlike Synanon, were based on the 12-Step philosophies of A.A., and N.A. These became known as 28 Days treatment centers. The model of treatment that was created in them became known as the Recovery Model.*

*The problem was, and has been since, that, in order to house, and treat alcoholics and addicts in a living situation rather than congregating in “meetings” and then going home, these centers tried to incorporate the Synanon idea of community. A community in which addicts, and alcoholics would live together. Where they would participate in groups, and form relationships. But, unlike Synanon, they would be exposed to the philosophy, and the way of life of the 12-Step Programs. During their stay in these centers, the addicts, and alcoholics, would be oriented, and encouraged, to continue to participate in the 12-Step Programs, beyond the treatment experience, through 12-Step meetings...*

...the Recovery Model is grounded in the 12-Step philosophy, but seeks to create, and maintain, communal living. By the dictates of its most basic principles, it is a “program of attraction.” Coercion, of any kind invalidates the entire treatment. The treatment must be based on non-confrontation, and unconditional support. But, how can a treatment program, based on such concepts, work with the resistant adolescents that are sent to treatment by their families, or the people mandated to treatment by the law, or the employer, or simply, the addict, and alcoholic, in an acute state of denial about their condition and of the suffering it is causing? Can you guess the terrible answer? Yes, profess the 12-Steps, enforce the T.C. Teach the 12-Step philosophy in groups, and lectures. And, institute a system in which the “recovering dopefiends” will be dealt with in the T.C. way: punishment, consequences, and humiliation, if necessary. This is when Treatment turns into MisTreatment” (Lescende, 2009).

## 2.2.11 Recovery Oriented Integration System (ROIS)

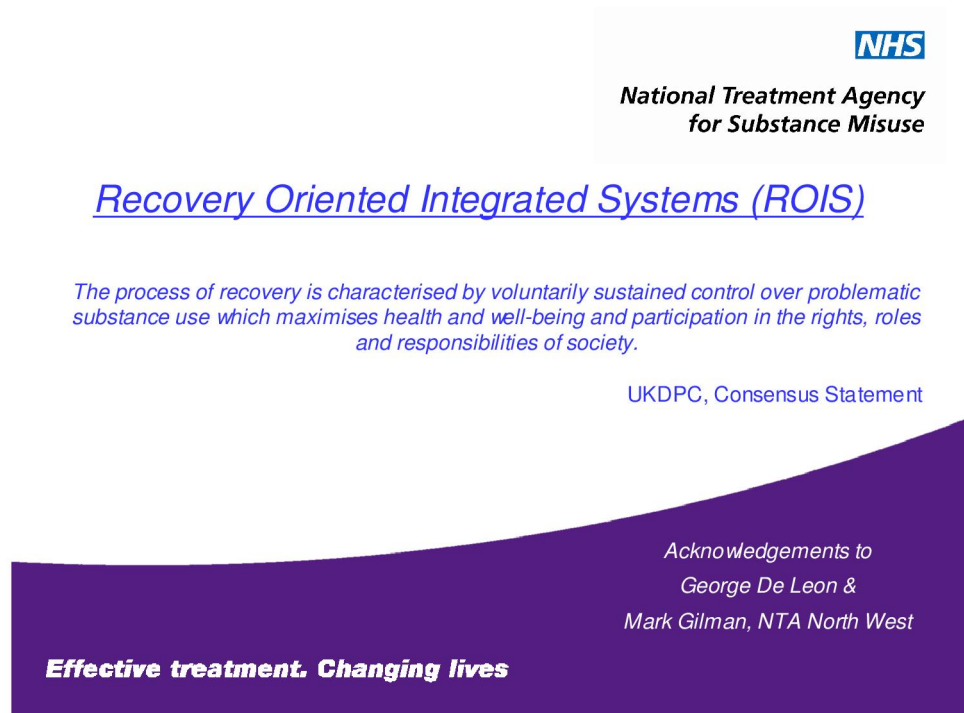


Figure 2.1: Scan of NHS National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse pamphlet entitled ‘*Recovery Oriented Integration Systems (ROIS)*’, page 1 (NHS, undated)

The “*Recovery Oriented Integration System (ROIS)*” was created by pioneer of the Therapeutic Communities movement George De Leon (Shapiro, Oubridge, 2012:9), as TCs needed to adapt to reduced funding and shorter durations of residential treatment (De Leon, 2010; De Leon, 2007). “*Recovery Management (RM)*” and ROIS are treatment models created to facilitate the continuation of TC treatment beyond residential facilities into the wider community (De Leon, 2010; De Leon, 2007). According to De Leon, “*The ROIS model of continuing care draws mainly from the research and clinical experience in community - and corrections - based TC programs... Briefly, ROIS clients move in small peer cadres through a continuum of settings: a prison based TC, a TC-oriented corrections-based transitional center, a TC-oriented post-release residential halfway house, followed by parole supervision and ambulatory treatment in the community. In each setting, the goals of re-entry and recovery are*

mutually pursued. Treatment interventions, social services, and surveillance activities are guided by a common perspective on the disorder and recovery. Thus, in this model, it is continuity of perspective (recovery), method (TC-oriented), and community (peer relationships) that constitutes an integrated system of care. (When parolees separate from ROIS, however, they must enter a system that includes the main elements of the RM model.) (De Leon, 2007:84). “Reductions in planned duration of (residential) treatment in the early (acute) stages of recovery have resulted in extending the period of continuing care or aftercare. In the best cases, TCs have adapted to this change in several ways: formulating more realistic goals for the shorter time in primary residential treatment; better assessment of individual differences as to the need for residential treatment (matching), and developing firmer links with aftercare resources, including greater involvement with 12-step groups” (De Leon, 2010). “Mutual Self-help (12-Step) support groups are also social-psychological strategies if these are also viewed as treatment” (De Leon, 2007:86).

Alcoholics Anonymous, among other “12 Step Mutual Aid” is viewed as an “integral part of ROIS”, where some A.A. members, recruited as “Recovered and recovering clients assist in training workers” (See Figure 2.2 below).

ROIS, also known in the UK as “recovery-oriented systems of care (ROSC)” was introduced into the UK healthcare system as part of the Government’s Drugs Strategy 2010 (HM Government, 2012; Department of Health, 2011:5), described as “a fundamental shift in policy in both Scotland and England toward a recovery perspective” (Best et al., 2010:265).

In his paper entitled “Alcoholics and narcotics anonymous: A radical movement under threat” Professor Zafiridis identifies the threats posed to A.A. by the integration of the fellowship within formal healthcare systems. At the time of writing, this paper may be viewed free Online.

## Integrated

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- Services work with the client’s care plan, TOP form and ITEP map.
- Workers in an integrated system are trained **together** in recovery principles and practice.
- Services in an integrated system are (contractually?) required to integrate their practice with other services?
- Recovered and recovering clients assist in training workers.
- Self Help (e.g. Intuitive), Mutual Aid (e.g. SMART) and 12 Step Mutual Aid (NA, CA, AA) are an integral part of a ROIS.

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**Effective treatment. Changing lives**

  
National Treatment Agency  
for Substance Misuse

Figure 2.2: Scan of NHS National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse pamphlet entitled ‘Recovery Oriented Integration Systems (ROIS)’, page 3 (NHS, undated)

## 2.2.12 Emergence of the Recovery Movement/Recovery Advocacy Movement

A recent development within the addiction treatment industry is the emergence of the new “Recovery Movement” and “Recovery Advocacy Movement” (White, 2000; White, 2007; White & Kurtz 2010; White, 2013). The movement arose in response to the ideological and financial backlash against the industry in the 1990s, which included “*growing frequency and stridency of attacks on the disease concept of addiction and Alcoholics Anonymous*” and “*erosion of funding for addiction treatment*” (White, 2000:7). This led to a call within the industry for “*a new, grassroots recovery movement*” (White, 2000:7).

In October 2001, more than 200 recovery advocates from 36 states met in St Paul, Minnesota at a recovery summit to develop a national recovery advocacy campaign called the Faces and Voices of Recovery campaign (White, 2007:696,697). Faces and Voices of Recovery (<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org>) was founded in 2001 “*as the organizational center of the recovery advocacy movement*” (White, 2009). Early funding from the Johnson Institute, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment allowed Faces and Voices of Recovery to hire its own staff and establish as a non-profit corporation in 2004 (White, 2007:697). As President of The Johnson Institute, William Cope Moyers, also Vice President of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, was instrumental in the founding of Faces and Voices for Recovery (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016d). The 2001 summit was held under the leadership of The Johnson Institute’s Alliance Project (White, 2000:7).

The Alliance Project emerged from the National Leadership Forum, created in response to a Johnson Institute Foundation initiative. The forum began meeting in 1997, drawing together more than 75 national organisations concerned with addiction. Meeting twice a year in Washington, DC, this forum fostered relationships between a wide variety of American interests, from criminal justice to public health. A work plan to create a Public Awareness Project was developed by the forum in April, 1998, that eventually emerged as the Alliance Project (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016:8).

In 1998, The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), the Federal government’s primary agency addressing addiction treatment, began the Recovery Community Support Program in the effort to build treatment programs, systems, and policies that reduce addiction and its related costs. Grants were awarded to 19 American communities in 1998 with the goal of assisting organising activities at the local level. A second wave of these grants was awarded in 2001 (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016:8). CSAT shifted its focus to the development of peer-based recovery support services in 2002 (White, 2007). CSAT also provided support for The Alliance Project in message development and the creation, production, and dissemination of educational materials useful to the recovery community. CSAT provided travel support for 75 members of the recovery community to participate in the 2001 recovery summit (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016:8). Presentations at the 2001 summit included addresses by two US Congress Senators Jim Ramstad and Paul Wellstone (White, 2007). In his keynote address, Senator Paul Wellstone said “*This is the beginning of a civil rights movement*” (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016:5).

In 2007, the Recovery Advocacy Movement was led at a national level by a coalition of Faces and Voices of Recovery, the Johnson Institute, the Legal Action Center and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (White, 2007). The movement has since globalised, extending itself to support Recovery Advocacy movements in the UK, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Canada (White, 2013:4).

Early core strategies for the movement included “*Building strong, grassroots recovery advocacy organizations and linking these organizations into a national movement... ..Advocating for meaningful representation and voice at policy levels... ..Educating the public, policymakers and service providers... ..Celebrating recovery from addiction through public events (recovery marches, rallies, concerts) that offer living testimony of the transformative power of recovery*” (White, 2007), “*constructing an ecumenical culture of addiction recovery in the United States with its own language, symbols, rituals, values, literature, art, music, theatre and film products, sporting teams, etc*” (White, 2013:7). “*The new recovery advocacy movement is challenging a vanguard of individuals and families in long-term addiction recovery to step forward and announce their presence within the American culture and to organize themselves as a political force*” (White, 2007:700).

The movement recruited people at grass roots level to organise recovery communities, and to campaign on behalf of the movement, targeting policy makers, community leaders, people in recovery, their families and allies (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016:6, 11). In a strategy of “*Putting a Face on Recovery*” and offering “*Living Proof*” (White, 2006:37), recovering alcoholics and drug addicts were also recruited to present themselves to the general public as living proof of recovery (White, 2006:37). It appears that most of those recruited by the Recovery Advocacy Movement are current members, or former members, of Alcoholics Anonymous or other Twelve Step fellowships. According to White and Kurtz, “*the majority of recovery advocates have past or current affiliation with Alcoholics*

*Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), or another Twelve Step recovery program”* (White & Kurtz, 2010).

Faces and Voices of Recovery offers potential recruits with a “*Recovery Community Organization Toolkit*” advising on how to organise a recovery community, recruit and engage people in recovery, family members, friends and allies, and incorporate the organisation with tax exempt 501(c)(3) status (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016a). According to the toolkit, “*Marty Mann founded the National Council on Alcoholism almost 70 years ago to provide education to raise the awareness of addiction and recovery across our society. Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, testified before Congress on the Hughes Act, envisioning a day when hundreds of AAs would fill the halls of Congress to demonstrate wellness and recovery...*” (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2016a:3).

This Faces and Voices of Recovery rendition of history, in which Bill W. supposedly envisioned “*a day when hundreds of AAs would fill the halls of Congress to demonstrate wellness and recovery*” completely contradicts Bill W’s warning of the potential disintegration of Alcoholics Anonymous, through A.A. members repeating Washingtonian Movement history:

*“Yet history records the rise, and let us not forget, the fall of any number of promising and benign undertakings - political, religious and social. While some did outlive their usefulness the greater part died prematurely. Something wrong or unsound within them always became apparent without. Their public relations suffered, they grew no more; they bogged down to a dead level or fell apart.*

*Personal glorification, overweening pride, consuming ambition, exhibitionism, intolerant smugness, money or power madness, refusal to admit mistakes and learn from them, self-satisfaction, lazy complacency - these, and many more are the garden varieties of ills which so often beset movements as well as individuals. While we A.A.s, as individuals, have suffered much from just such defects, and must daily admit and deal with them in our personal lives if we are to stay sober and useful, it is nevertheless true that such attitudes have seldom crept into our public relations. But some day they might. Let us never say, “It can’t happen here.”*

*Those who read the July Grapevine were startled, then sobered, by the account which it carried of the Washingtonian movement. It was hard for us to believe that 100 years ago the newspapers of this country were carrying enthusiastic accounts about 100,000 alcoholics who were helping each other stay sober; that today the influence of this good work has so completely disappeared that few of us had ever heard of it.*

*Let’s cast our eyes over that Grapevine piece about the Washingtonians and excerpt a few sentences: “Mass meeting in 1841, at City Hall Park, New York City, attracted 4,000 listeners. Speakers stood on upturned rum kegs.” “Triumphal parades in Boston. Historic Faneuil Hall jammed.” (Overdone self-advertising - exhibitionism? Anyhow, it sounds very alcoholic, doesn’t it!) “Politicians looked hungrily at the swelling membership ... helped wreck local groups through their efforts to line up votes.” (Looks like personal ambition again, also unnecessary group participation in controversial issues; the hot political issue was then abolition of slavery.) “The Washingtonians were confident...they scorned old methods.” (Too cocksure, maybe. Couldn’t learn from others and became competitive, instead of cooperative, with other organizations in their field.)*

*Like A.A., the Washingtonians originally had but one object: “Was concerned only with the reclamation of drunkards and held that it was none of its affair if others used alcohol who seemed little harmed by it.” But later on came this development: “There was division among the older local organizations - some wanted wines and beers - some clamored for legislation to outlaw alcohol - in its zeal for new members many intemperate drinkers, not necessarily alcoholic, were pledged.” (The original strong and simple group purpose was thus dissipated in fruitless controversy and divergent aims.)*

*And again, “Some (of the Washingtonian local groups) dipped into their treasuries to finance their own publications. There was no overall editorial policy. Editors of local papers got into squabbles with editors of temperance papers.” (Apparently the difficulty was not necessarily the fact they had local publications. It was more due to the refusal of the Washingtonians to stick to their original purpose and so refrain from fighting anybody; also to the obvious fact that they had no national public relations policy or tradition which all members were willing to follow.)*

*We are sure that if the original Washingtonians could return to this planet they would be glad to see us learning from their mistakes. They would not regard our observations as aimless criticism. Had we lived in their day we might have made the same errors. Perhaps we are beginning to make some of them now.*

*So we need to constantly scrutinize ourselves carefully, in order to make everlastingly certain that we always shall be strong enough and single purposed enough from within, to relate ourselves rightly to the world without.*

*Now then, does A.A. have a public relations policy? Is it good enough? Are its main principles clear? Can it meet changing conditions over the years to come? (Bill W., The Language of the Heart:4-5).*



In 2006, William White expressed his vision for the movement: “*If successful, the New Recovery Advocacy Movement will create a fully developed recovery advocacy culture - a culture with its own history, institutions, folk heroes, “kinetic” ideas, core values, key roles, images, symbols, language, art, music and rituals. It will use the collective elements of this culture to extend its influence into the larger society in which it is nested. It is, in part, through seeding the larger society with these elements that advocacy movements achieve the changes that they are seeking... ..one element of the recovery advocacy culture, that of language, can be used as a tool of self-transformation, constituency mobilization, and social and political change*” (White, 2006:1). “*There will be many strategies and tactics of the New Recovery Advocacy Movement. Language will be one method of altering the consciousness of those who make up this movement and altering the attitudes and beliefs in the community. As this New Recovery Advocacy Movement emerges, we must carefully assess and shape this language and then let that chosen language evolve as the Movement matures*” (White, 2006:42). “*One function of the New Recovery Advocacy Movement will be to influence professionally-directed addiction treatment toward a more recovery oriented system of care*” (White, 2006:33). Among the concepts and words the Recovery Movement needed to elevate in 2006 were ‘*Recovery*’ ‘*Recovery Community/Communities of Recovery*’, ‘*Advocacy*’, ‘*Recovery Support Services / Recovery Coach*’, ‘*Recovery-oriented Systems of Care*’ (White, 2006:33).

In 2013, achievements of the movement included “*increased recovery representation at national, state, and local policy levels and key policy successes, the emergence of recovery as an organizing paradigm for addiction policy and service practice, major efforts to reconnect addiction treatment with the larger and more enduring processes of personal/family recovery via models of sustained recovery management and recovery-oriented systems of care, mass mobilization of communities of recovery via highly successful recovery celebration events, e.g., marches, rallies, festivals, and town meetings, the spread of new recovery support institutions - RCOs, recovery community centers, recovery residences / National Association of Recovery Residences, recovery schools / Association of Recovery Schools, recovery industries, recovery ministries, exponential growth of peer recovery support services (PRSS), new peer service roles (e.g., recovery coaches) and PRSS practice standards (Council on Accreditation of Peer Recovery Support Services), and increased interest in recovery within the addictions research community*” (White, 2013:4).

At the national level of UK government, Recovery Advocacy came from two primary international sources: “*the work of the Betty Ford Institute Consensus Panel (2007)*” and “*the work of William White*” (Best et al., 2010: 265:266), which saw the foundation of “*The UK Recovery Academy in 2009*” (Best et al., 2010:268). According to Best et al., 2010, “*The UK Recovery Academy was founded in July 2009 with the aim of identifying recovery activities in UK communities, developing an evidence base for recovery-focused work, and promoting recovery as part of an agenda of improving engagement, choice, and hope for substance users. It is a collection of academics, practitioners, and policymakers who have been inspired by the successes of the recovery movement in the United States (evidenced by the work of William White [2008] and Faces and Voices of Recovery)... ..At the initial meeting, held in Manchester, around 80 people gathered during 2 days to discuss the role for the Recovery Academy, and a considerable proportion of the time was devoted to identifying the barriers to implementing recovery-oriented systems of care (White, 2007) and promoting recovery in the United Kingdom*” (Best et al., 2010:268).

In what has been described as ‘*a fundamental shift in policy in both Scotland and England toward a recovery perspective*’ (Best et al., 2010:265), the Recovery Advocacy Movement’s agenda and the Synanon cult based Therapeutic Communities Movement’s *Recovery Orientated Integration System (ROIS)*, also known in the UK as *Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC)*, have since been implemented in the UK healthcare system as part of the Government’s Drugs Strategy, 2010 (Department of Health, 2011:5; HM Government, 2012; Best et al., 2010).

The government’s commitment to an integrated recovery-oriented model of treatment for drug problems was met with some resistance from a range of professionals in the United Kingdom (Best et al., 2010:264). Among the 26 concerns and objections raised was number 8: “*AA AND NA ARE JUST RELIGIOUS CULTS IN DISGUISE—IT IS BRAINWASHING*” (Best et al., 2010:274; original emphasis).

An evaluation of the merits of each concern was published in a paper entitled “*Recovery and Straw Men: An Analysis of the Objections Raised to the Transition to a Recovery Model in UK Addiction Services*” (Best et al., 2010). Among the co-authors were Rowdy Yates, Mark Gilman and William White (Best et al., 2010). Rowdy Yates founded a TC based on Synanon, now one of the UK’s largest drug treatment agencies (Yates, 2011); Mark Gilman was employed by this agency for fourteen years (White, 2011:3). William White describes himself as “*deeply entrenched in the philosophies of the therapeutic community and Minnesota Model alcoholism programs of the late 1960s and early 1970s*” (White, 2009). White has worked as a consultant for Faces and Voices of Recovery since its inception and is the Recovery Advocacy Movement’s historian (White, 2013:10,11). According to White, Synanon was a “*milestone*” in the organisation of the recovery movement, contributing to the creation of what he describes as

the “*culture of recovery*” (White, 1996:233,225).

According to pioneer of the Therapeutic Communities Movement, David Deitch, “*The recovery movement is timely, necessary, and has already provided a boost to TCs fortunate enough to work in proximity to active recovery management groups*” (Deitch, 2010).

### 2.2.13 Contemporary Thought Reform Programmes

Since there appears to be some evidence that cults are focussing their recruitment activities within Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and other 12-step programmes (Tobias, Lalich, 1994:50; Lalich, Tobias, 2006:91,194), the evolution of contemporary TCs and other movements within the treatment industry, as they affect Alcoholics Anonymous, ought to be taken into consideration together with the advances made in psychology which are used by today’s compliance professionals and cults. It is considered beyond the scope of this report to attempt to explain the complex methods employed by cults in order for them to gain control over individuals and social groups. However, the following quotations may lead the reader to some understanding of how cults and contemporary thought reform programmes operate.

“*Contemporary thought-reform programs are generally far more sophisticated in their selection of both destabilization and influence techniques than were the programs studied during the 1950s*”(Ofshe, 2000:898). “*Some second generation programs rely heavily on peer group techniques, similar to encounter groups, but with a focus on intimate rather than peripheral topics. Other second generation programs employ more sophisticated emotion-arousing tactics. Techniques used in clinical psychotherapeutic practice are often appropriated to the programs. Hence, much of what has been learned about the management of emotional experience in the practice of clinical psychology and psychiatry is brought into play as a method through which to cause the target to experience intense emotion*” (Singer, Ofshe, 1986:10).

“*The initial phase of recruitment often involves an organized “seduction” period during which affective bonds between recruiting agents and the target are developed (Bainbridge, 1978; Ofshe et al., 1974, 1980; Taylor, 1978; West and Singer, 1980). During this period, targets are encouraged to believe that the organization can provide a service they desire or that it is committed to goals they value. The strength of developing bonds is continually tested against demands for increasing involvement and deference to the demands of the controlling organization (Singer, Ofshe, 1986:6). “In addition to material and structural changes, the ability of the organization to increase its relative power over the individual’s life depends upon shifting the target’s social and emotional attachments to individuals who have accepted the organization’s authority and rules. For this reason, when being recruited to some organizations, individuals find themselves recipients of great affection, displays of interest, and virtually endless invitations to group functions*”(Singer, Ofshe, 1986:7).

“*Thought-reform programs have been employed in attempts to control and indoctrinate individuals, societal groups (e.g., intellectuals), and even entire populations*” (Ofshe, 1992). “*The psychotechnology of thought reform is not going to go away. It is not harmless, as the apologists and cult spokespeople would have us believe. We have, in fact, seen cult techniques of persuasion and control become more skilful, more subtle, and more damaging during the last two decades. Education, information, and vigilance are constantly needed to keep us, and our minds free*” (Singer, 2003:102). “*In the past twenty years, the destructive cult phenomenon has mushroomed into a problem of tremendous social and political importance. It is estimated that there are approximately three thousand destructive cults in the United States, involving as many as three million people. Some cults have millions of dollars, others are quite poor. Some clearly, however, are more dangerous than others. Not content to exercise their power simply over the lives of their members, they have an agenda to gain political power and use it to reshape American society – and, in the case of some of them, even the world*” (Hassan, 1990:36).

“*What we see today is the continuing presence in society of either organized groups or individual persons who use intense influence on others in order to gain control and power – over money, people and property. Besides being describable as cults or groups using thought reform processes, instances of this process are also called scams, confidence games, hustles, undue influence, improper influence, deceptions, and frauds, among other labels. These names denote the reality behind the way the group or person induces others to go along with a plan that benefits the manipulator and exploits the manipulated, even though the latter may at first, or even for a long while, think that the venture is other than it really is. Cult leaders and con artists are opportunists who read the times and the ever changing culture and adapt their pitch to what will appeal at a given moment. These manipulators survive because they adapt and because they are chameleon-like. So, at some times we get cults based on health fads, business-training programs, get rich quick schemes, and relationship improvement seminars; at others we get fundamentalist religious*

cults, Eastern meditation groups, identity or hate groups, longevity groups, and so forth. Ideas come and go. But the skilful word merchants know how to push peoples buttons, how to get a responsive chord resonating in a listener. Thus the buzzwords also change across time. Ten years ago, the key words that would set off a responsive chord in people were community, communication, creativity, awareness, consciousness expansion, transcendental, transformational, holistic, peace, growth, stress, affirmations, and alternative. Today the keywords picked up by cults and manipulators are breakthrough, empowerment, spiritual awakening, paradigm, angels, self, identity, victim, guides, shamans, celebration, and source or sourcing. Over the years, cults have shown themselves to be variations on a theme, and their changing use of language is the way that they modernize. But just as some sailors in Greek myth were lured to shipwreck by the Siren's song, so some were saved when Odysseus stopped their ears. We must constantly watch for the new buzzwords that might be used to entice the unsuspecting. We must know when the words that make us yearn to follow someone are a Siren's song" (Singer, 2003:50).

A salutary warning for A.A. comes from the ancient Greeks not only in Singer's example of the Siren's song, but also with the example of the Trojan Horse: "If the professionalized members of the AA and NA groups, and the owners of private treatment centres, insist on claiming that by attending group meetings, they are offering their knowledge and experience for free, then definitely this offer resembles the Trojan Horse that Greeks gave as a gift to the citizens of Troy" (Zafridis, Lainas, 2012:99).

Here it might be worth pausing to consider how many of the above buzzwords mentioned by Singer are currently fashionable in the treatment industry and in A.A. How about *spiritual awakening, empowerment, paradigm, guides, celebration, community*? What about other buzzwords? perhaps 'ninety meetings in ninety days', 'the promises', *commitment, solution, change, 'back to basics', visible, 'happy, joyous and free', faith-based, hero, recovery, recovered, spiritual experience, ambassador, advocate, champion*?

The manipulation of language in order to gain control over people was understood by Synanon's founder Charles Dederich. According to Dederich, "It's all done with words" (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:176) "We once had the idea of 'graduate.' This was a sop to social workers and professionals who wanted me to say that we were producing 'graduates' (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:292). "The language of psychology and sociology is great stuff. Whether or not the recovering addict knows what he's talking about is exquisitely unimportant at this time. Very quickly, in a matter of ninety days, they turn into junior psychiatrists and sociologists. They become familiar with the use of a dozen or twenty words and misuse them" (Yablonski, 1967:240). According to Yablonski, "In a next phase, the individual goes through what is often referred to as a "honeymoon period" in Synanon. Here the newcomer has figuratively "found God" and he tends to accept all the Synanon concepts. He begins to parrot Synanon language" (Yablonski, 1967:261). According to Ofshe, "The politicians were not paid off... ...only conned" (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:176).

According to an interview with William White in 2011, Mark Gilman is quoted as saying that "George De Leon commented on a recent visit to Liverpool that we can 'put the tambourine down now'. We have got people humming the recovery tune. Now we need to teach them the words" (White, 2011:9). In 2012, De Leon "reflected back to the 1960s and the early days of Phoenix House and Synanon, whose founders, he said, were the first recovery champions, "only we didn't call it 'recovery,' we called it 'change.' But then he acknowledged that the word recovery came into vogue off the back of political and funding considerations in America. Something similar happened in the UK" (Shapiro & Oubridge, 2012:19).

The professional approaches used by cults to indoctrinate and control individuals and social groups include the staging of workshops, seminars, large group awareness training schemes, business management programmes and weekend retreats, (Singer, 2003:42,85,91,) According to Singer, "In recent years, some groups have also found new ways to recruit by gaining access to commercial businesses and government agencies. A series of cultic groups has begun selling business management programs that rely on intense influence techniques rather than skills training and, in many instances, serve as avenues to increase the membership of the parent organizations" (Singer, 2003:85). "Many members of a variety of cults work for little or no pay in businesses owned and operated by their cults. Their earnings are siphoned off, directly, or indirectly, to cult headquarters, along with company profits. This puts cults in a strategic position to place very low bids for jobs, which private industry cannot match. In this way, these cult businesses can secure many contracts. For example, using free or underpaid labor, these groups can run boats more cheaply or provide field hands at lower rates than other employers and so they compete unfairly in the market place" (Singer, 2003:87). "Cults recruit everywhere. They hold lectures, seminars, retreats, revivals, and meetings of all sorts, and they go door to door. They run schools, universities, health clinics, and businesses. They advertise in New Age magazines, in alternative newspapers, and in business journals. They have tables at professional and trade meetings, computer expositions, publishing exhibitions, and street fairs. One large cult has a rock band that tours the

country and serves as an attraction in malls and large assembly areas. Of course, cult members also recruit among their own family circles, friendship networks, co-workers, and vocational and hobby associations. Although cults are active everywhere, schools and university campuses have been a fertile field for recruitment for all types of cults since the sixties. Some cults assign members to recruit on junior and senior high school grounds, in college dormitories and at all sorts of campus events and locales” (Singer, 2003:107).

As cults have moved well beyond the fringes into the mainstream of society (Singer, 2003:6) so too thought reform techniques which bypass psychological defences are used ethically and unethically by corporations in marketing, sales, advertising, and charity fundraising (Cialdini, 2007). Social psychologist Robert Cialdini outlined six principles generally used in the process of influencing another person (Lalich, Tobias, 2006:22). According to Cialdini, “..each principle is examined as to its ability to produce a distinct kind of automatic, mindless compliance from people, that is, a willingness to say yes without thinking first. The evidence suggests that the ever-accelerating pace and informational crush of modern life will make this particular form of unthinking compliance more and more prevalent in future. It will be increasingly important for society, therefore, to understand the how and why of automatic influence” (Cialdini, 2007: xiv).

#### **2.2.14 Thought Reform Programmes and the Production of Psychiatric Casualties**

A comprehensive study of encounter groups in the early 1970s found that encounter groups were not as safe as had been claimed and were psychologically damaging to eight percent of those who participated in them (Lieberman, Yalom, Miles, 1973:174,426,). The casualty and drop-out rate from the Synanon encounter group studied was significantly high (Lieberman, Yalom, Miles, 1973:190), ‘casualty’ being defined by Lieberman as “an individual who, as a direct result of his experience in the encounter group, became more psychologically distressed and/or employed more maladaptive mechanisms of defense. Furthermore, to be so defined this negative change must not be transient, but enduring, as judged eight months after the group experience” (Lieberman, Yalom, Miles, 1973:170).

“Many encounter groups became settings of high drama, producing in the members anxiety, extreme emotional arousal, psychotic outbreaks, and suicide attempts” (Ofshe, Watters, 1999:92).

“Therapeutic community thought reform programs appear more likely to induce enduring fears, self-mutilation, self-abasement, and inappropriate display of artificial assertiveness and emotionality” (Singer, Ofshe, 1990).

“Targets are often expected to involve their families with the recruiting organization. Family members, once involved, are subject to the same influence process as was the original target. This may lead to family members’ becoming more committed to the organization than to the relative who first brought them in” (Ofshe, Singer, 1986:7).

“Some cult members end up in psychiatric hospitals; others sometimes drift for years after a cult experience, never quite getting it together”(Singer, 2003:93).

#### **2.2.15 The distortion of history relating to the origin of Synanon, Alcoholics Anonymous and the TC movement**

Modern cults use Orwellian techniques of manipulating language and information as a means of milieu control (Singer, 2003: xxvi-xxvii,54,56,223). In his book *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell describes how the altering of history by the ruling power can control the present population.

“...And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed – if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth. ‘Who controls the past,’ ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’ And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was quite simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. ‘Reality control,’ they called it: in *Newspeak*, ‘doublethink” (Orwell, 1949: Part I, Chapter III).

The TC movement’s modified policy toward Alcoholics Anonymous appears to have changed the way in which the contemporary TC movement defines its philosophical origins, thereby establishing a theoretical link between the TC movement and A.A. which did not previously exist. Misinformation concerning the relationship between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Oxford Group also appears in academic papers.

According to Deitch, “*Dederich, Synanon’s charismatic founder, deliberately distanced Synanon from AA and NA. Early members of the TC movement had no idea of the history, Steps, and traditions of these fellowships*” (Deitch, 2010). This contrasts with the contemporary TC movement in which, according to De Leon, “*the direct sources of many of the essential elements are attributable to three notable precursors: The Oxford Group, AA, and Synanon*”

(De Leon, 2000:15). *“The essential elements of contemporary TCs for addictions – the concepts, program model, and basic practices- first evolved in Synanon, founded in 1958 in Santa Monica, California. A considerable literature documents the history and features of that remarkable program (Casriel, 1966; Endore, 1968; Yablonski, 1965,1989). The founding force of Synanon was Charles (“Chuck”) Dederich, a recovering alcoholic, who integrated his AA experiences with other philosophical, pragmatic, and psychological influences to launch and develop the Synanon program. The beginnings were humble, and classically self-help. Dederich along with several AA companions initiated weekly ‘free association’ groups in his apartment. These evolved into a unique encounter group process (“the game”), which resulted in distinct psychological changes in the participants, including Dederich himself”* (De Leon, 2000:17).

There appears to be no evidence presented in the definitive records of Synanon’s early history by Yablonski, Casriel, and Morantz, (*‘Synanon: The Tunnel Back’* (Yablonski, 1967), *‘So Fair a House: The Story of Synanon’* (Casriel, 1963) and *‘From Miracle to Madness: The True Story of Charles Dederich and Synanon’* (Morantz, 2015), to support De Leon’s view that Dederich *“integrated his AA experiences”* with other philosophical, pragmatic, and psychological influences to launch and develop the Synanon programme. Synanon appears to have developed entirely on the other philosophical, pragmatic, and psychological influences, which are cited earlier in this report, on pages 3-5. Dederich concluded that *“The first meetings were non directive; they were a la AA. I felt though they were limited and really of no value... ..After the third or fourth meeting, it became apparent the meeting took on a different quality when I maintained stout and rigid control”* (Casriel, 1963:21). *“We were building something new and different. Although I will always be grateful to A.A. for helping me personally, Synanon has nothing to do with A.A., any more than a rowboat compares with an airplane”* (Yablonski, 1967:55). Dederich’s so called “AA companions”, drifted away fairly quickly after Dederich introduced drug addicts into his group (Casriel, 1963:25), and thereafter when Dederich told an alcoholic *“to get lost”* (Casriel, 1963:26); Of the alcoholics who were members of Dederich’s disaffiliated group in 1958, only one remained in Synanon five years later in 1963 (Casriel, 1963:22). Furthermore, according to Deitch, *“Early members of the TC movement had no idea of the history, Steps, and traditions of these fellowships”* (Deitch, 2010); how therefore, can De Leon’s cited key development in contemporary TCs honestly be regarded as a *“reintegration of AA 12-step principles and traditions into the treatment protocol of many residential TCs”* (De Leon, 2000:25) when early TCs were not integrated with A.A. 12-step principles and traditions in the first place? The difference in meaning between ‘integration’ and ‘reintegration’ is profound, as are the consequences for A.A. when contemporary Synanon TC/Recovery Movement/Recovery Advocacy Movement organisations falsely present the A.A. co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob as originators of the Therapeutic Communities/Recovery Movement, instead of Charles Dederich.

The petition - or harassment - of the US Postal Service to produce a Bill W. postage stamp to honour the 80th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous, organised by several contemporary Therapeutic Community/Recovery Community organisations: *Writers in Treatment, Reel Recovery Film Festival, and In the Rooms* (Schultz, 2013) highlights how a revisionist view of history may be employed as a subtle, yet powerful tool to manipulate people’s present behaviour with profound effects on the targeted society. The organisations planned to unveil the stamp at the 2015 Alcoholics Anonymous International Convention held in Atlanta, Georgia (Schultz, 2013). In the U.K., the falsely implied affiliation of the A.A. co-founders with the Recovery Movement is also published by the National Health Service (Gilman, undated. See Figure 2.3 on page 24).

Synanon appears often to be portrayed as an organisation which split from an A.A. group. However, this account largely appears to be based on Dederich’s version of events as presented to Casriel and Yablonski. The term *‘disaffiliated group’* employed by Yablonski to describe Dederich’s group (Yablonski, 1967:50) is significant, because there appears to be no evidence to suggest that Dederich’s group was ever in fact part of an A.A. group. This appears to be an assumption made by Dederich himself. The so called “A.A.” club managed by Dederich, was not in fact an A.A. club; the issue of A.A. member’s clubs had already been clarified by Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1940s. Clubs, Twelve Step Houses, and other related facilities or outside enterprises managed by A.A. members were not considered part of Alcoholics Anonymous, but the private concerns of those who wished to run them. As such, they were requested not to use the name Alcoholics Anonymous or A.A. (both of which are registered Alcoholics Anonymous trademarks), actual or implied, in their title, advertising and fundraising (Bill W., 1947, 1947a, 1948, 1955; A.A. World Services Inc., 1981, 1981a). Dederich’s club’s board of directors, therefore, was not an A.A. board of directors, as assumed by Dederich. The attempt to take over the Saturday night A.A. meeting in Santa Monica by Dederich and his group of mainly drug addicts, met with resistance from A.A. members. According to Dederich, *“I recall the leader stopping the meeting. They didn’t like us. The alkie didn’t like the addicts, and they didn’t like me in particular... ..So they didn’t like me up there, and they didn’t like my gang because they were mostly addicts. They made things difficult for us. I remember getting up in the meeting and saying, ‘All right, let’s go home-the hell*

*with this.' So the whole meeting got up, and we all got into our automobiles and came down to the club, and we never went back to A.A. again"* (Yablonski, 1967:55). It may also be noted that prior to his relocating to Santa Monica, Dederich was in conflict with A.A. members in Los Angeles. According to Dederich, A.A. members had *"finally told me to shut up or get lost"* (Casriel, 1963:18). It appears that Dederich's *disaffiliated group* and his club did not split from A.A., but were, from the beginning, according to A.A. Tradition, a related facility or outside enterprise which developed outside an A.A. group, was rejected by the A.A. group, and was therefore, never part of Alcoholics Anonymous.

According to Troyer, *"While the roots and origins of the TC have been well explored, and the links between AA and the founder of the seminal American TC, Synanon, have been abundantly documented in the literature, most notably by Deitch ( 1973 ) and Glaser (1981, 1974), relatively little attention has been paid to the current relationship between 12-Step groups and TCs"* (Troyer et al., 2012:177). According to Glaser, *"When principal reliance must be placed upon primary and secondary documents and upon conjecture, one can only claim to be presenting a possible view of history, and one must admit that there are other possible views [9]. The history of the TC conforms to the latter rather than to the former circumstances. Although one can trace it with fair certainty back through Synanon and Alcoholics Anonymous to the Oxford Group Movement, from that point it becomes a rather difficult matter... ... Synanon was founded in February, 1958, in California... ...Charles E. Dederich III, an ex-alcoholic and a graduate of Alcoholics Anonymous, was and is its guiding light. Initially there was a close and intended rapport between A.A. and Synanon, and attendance at A.A. meetings was a regular feature of Synanon's early history. But as the young organization grew, Dederich's natural talent for innovation combined with a perceived need to modify the basic A.A. programme to make it applicable to the rather different circumstances of narcotic addiction. The result was a different programme. By September of 1958 most of the alcoholics had left and the formal connection with A.A. no longer existed"* (Glaser, 1981:14,15).

The version of Synanon's history and its alleged relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous which is presented in academic literature published for addiction treatment appears mainly to be based on literature produced by influential former Synanon cult members and other professionals who were, or are, sympathetic to the methods of the Synanon TC. For example: Lewis Yablonski (former Synanon director), David Deitch (former director of Synanon's Westpoint facility), George De Leon (former Synanon participant), Naya Arbiter and Rod Mullen (Former Synanon members). Dederich was known for his changing and contradictory statements (Janzen, 2001:139). Such contradiction can be found in Yablonski's account of Synanon's early years. On the one hand Yablonski quoted Dederich as saying *"Synanon has nothing to do with A.A."* (Yablonski, 1967:55), yet on the other hand Yablonski claimed Synanon *"models itself on Alcoholics Anonymous"* (Yablonski, 1967:334).

It can be seen that over the passing of time, what was a Synanon programme which had nothing to do with A.A. became a Synanon programme which is modelled on A.A. What was Charles Dederich being told by A.A. members to *"shut up or get lost"* (Casriel, 1963:18), became *"Charles E. Dederich III, an ex-alcoholic and a graduate of Alcoholics Anonymous"*(Glaser, 1981:15). What was a battle between an A.A. group in Santa Monica and Dederich's unaffiliated group of mainly drug addicts (Yablonski, 1967:54, 55), became *"Initially there was a close and intended rapport between A.A. and Synanon, and attendance at A.A. meetings was a regular feature of Synanon's early history"* (Glaser, 1981:15). And so the tale moves on to 2010:

*"The roots of the modern drug-free therapeutic community (TC) movement lie in the mutual-aid fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous..."*(Yates, De Leon, Mullen & Arbiter, 2010).

Historical context...

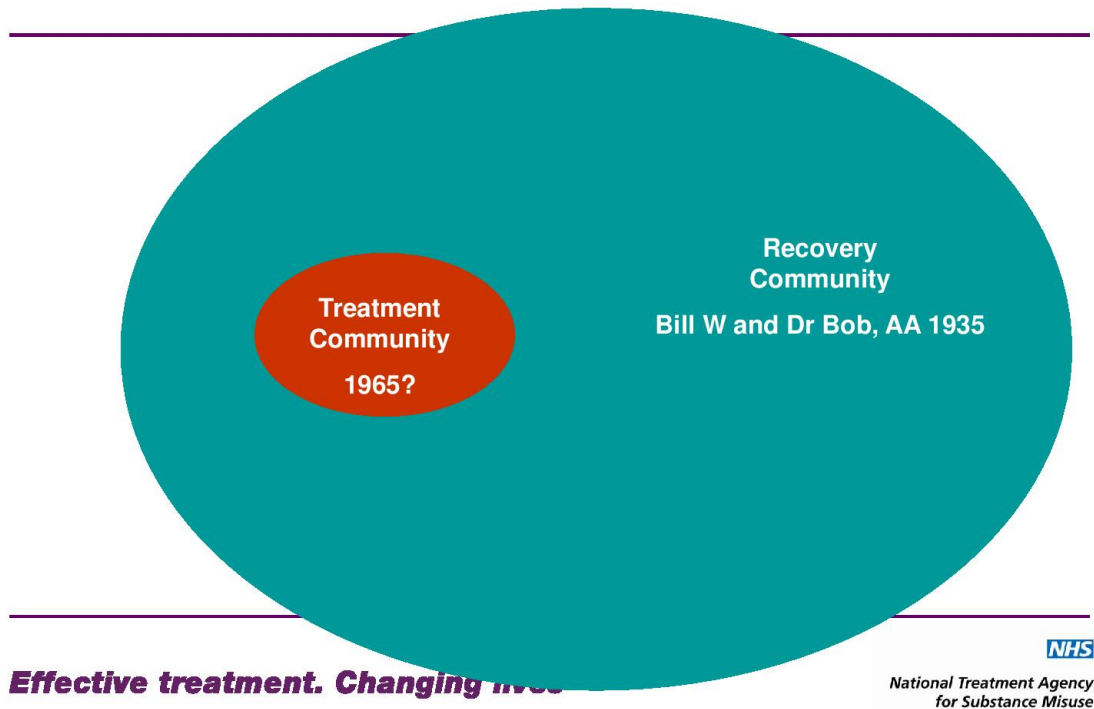


Figure 2.3: Scan of NHS National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse pamphlet entitled ‘*What Does Recovery Orientated Systems (ROIS) mean for future treatment services?*’, by Mark Gilman, page 6 (Gilman, undated)

“...And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed – if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth. ‘Who controls the past,’ ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’ And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was quite simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. ‘Reality control,’ they called it: in Newspeak, ‘doublethink” (Orwell, 1949: Part I, Chapter III).

### 2.2.16 Contemporary TCs

Since the late sixties the TC movement has evolved, adapting to a wide range of different settings and different populations, whilst providing services related to addiction, family, education, vocational training, prisons, homeless shelters, human services, hospital wards, medical and mental health, all of which resulted in a wide diversity of modified programmes. With each TC being a separate self-contained community, it has correspondingly evolved with its own unique treatment protocols and name. Some contemporary TCs permit use of prescribed drugs and are therefore no longer “drug free.” Other educational programs are more like schools than treatment centres. With some residential programmes length of stay can vary from 3, 6, 12, or 12-18 months, an evolution from the original planned durations of 2-3 years. Some may be TC oriented day treatment models of 4-8 hours duration, followed by the individual’s monitoring by family and peers; not all TCs are in residential settings (De Leon, 2000: 3, 4, 5, 9, 28, 382, 385t, 386t, 392, 393). Less than a third of the 500 Drug Free treatment facilities in the USA in 1988 labelled themselves as traditional TCs (De Leon, 1988:160).

According to De Leon, the future aspiration for the TC movement is to evolve beyond the field of addiction to become “*change-oriented communities*” which can “*revitalize the social climate itself*” (De Leon, 2000:393). “*While the current applications of the TC have targeted the substance abuse problem, they also have demonstrated how community as method can modify certain institutional settings and human services. The environments of jails, prisons, shelters, hospital wards, or schools can become change orientated communities*” (De Leon, 2000:393).

According to Broekaert, “*From the 1990s, the evolution was characterized by an expanding vision that sought to include new target groups (such as adolescents, psychiatric patients, homeless people, ethnically and culturally diverse clients, prisoners, people using substitute drugs, such as methadone, etc.)*” (Broekaert et al., 2004:232).

According to Yates, “*Clearly, the future for the TC now lies in niche marketing of a kind already beginning to be apparent in some areas. In order to ensure continued existence and integrity, TCs will, in the future, need to target those areas where they can make the most impact and achieve the most good. This means designing specialised TCs for particular (vulnerable) populations such as the homeless and the dual-diagnosed, and establishing TCs in areas where they are likely to attract a higher proportion of their traditional client group – TCs in prisons, detention centres and so forth. Certainly, establishing TCs to work in collaboration with the criminal justice system is effectively a return to earlier times since Synanon accepted court referrals from an early stage in its existence (Rawlings & Yates,2001). It would also have the advantage of responding to the current pre-occupation of most European governments with the drugs–crime axis. For, in the past decade, the political imperative has shifted once again, away from public health and towards crime prevention*” (Yates, 2003:242).

With the TC movement’s modified policy toward Alcoholics Anonymous the latter appears to have become one of the niche markets targeted by the TC movement at international, national and local levels.



## Chapter 3

# Synanon TC influence on the Criminal Justice System and Alcoholics Anonymous

### 3.1 Synanon TC political influence and influence on the Criminal Justice System

In line with the prevailing medical theories and social construction of addiction as a “disease,” alcoholics were re-framed as addicts. *“habitual drinkers (about whom the first theories of addiction were developed) were reframed as addicts who needed to abstain from alcohol to conquer their addiction.”* (Tiger, 2013b:3)

As cited in earlier sections, the Synanon cult continues to have significant impact on drug rehabilitation and prison reform, via the TC movement. The Synanon TC developing as a model both for addiction treatment and also for the correction of criminal behaviour (Yablonski, 1967:333; Janzen, 2001:2; Yates, 2003; Vandeveldt et al., 2004). In its early years, besides being promoted as a cure for addiction, Synanon was also heralded as a major breakthrough in criminology (Yablonski, 1967:333-366; Ofshe, 1980:110-111). Synanon also gained political influence at the level of the White House via Senator Thomas J. Dodd, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee to investigate Juvenile Delinquency (Yablonski, 1967:74; Casriel, 1963: Prologue).

Political influence by proponents of Synanon TC philosophy may have continued at a high level in government via TCs such as Straight Inc. and Amity Inc. Straight Inc. was a Synanon based TC co-founded and directed for 17 years by Mel Sembler, a Bush family friend, Republican fundraiser (Gorenfield, 2006; Szalavitz, 2007) and former U.S. Ambassador to Italy and Australia (Sembler, 2014).

Amity Inc., a notable Synanon TC (Janzen, 2001:242) was directed by former Synanon members Naya Arbiter, Rod Mullen, and Bette Fleishman (Phoenix New Times 1996; Amity Inc., 2014a). According to the Phoenix New Times, Arbiter joined Synanon in 1970 after being arrested on drug transportation charges and became a close friend of Dederich’s daughter, who later became chairman of Synanon. Fleishman joined Synanon in 1968 where she ‘apprenticed’ herself to Dederich’s wife, Betty Dederich. Mullen joined Synanon in 1967 and was director at Synanon’s communal school. The three remained in Synanon throughout its violent and destructive phase until Dederich pleaded no contest at his trial in 1980 (Phoenix New Times, 1996). Mullen left Synanon two weeks after his deposition at Dederich’s trial and gave evidence of crimes to the Department of Justice (Morantz, 2011). During the 1970s the large number of children running away from Synanon led to the Marin County Probation Department to refuse to refer children to Synanon in 1976 (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:29-30). Reported child abuse in Synanon included vicious beating (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:125) and rape (Halperin, Markowitz, 1991).

According to Halperin, *“Children of members were subjected to extraordinary brutalization. J., a former member who was enrolled at age 11 when her parents joined, eventually sought treatment at the Cult Hotline and Clinic. She described how she was separated from her parents and received no education. After enrollment, she was repeatedly raped by groups of men who were “in charge” of the children. She described having been severely beaten when she attempted to run away from Synanon. Isolation and degradation in confrontational stripping-down group encounter sessions – the “Synanon Game” – also followed her attempts to escape. During her initial consultation at the Cult*

*Clinic, she reported anxiety-laden nightmares reflecting her entrapment in the group. J.'s fears and anxieties are similar to those reported by many members and former members of other destructive cults" (Halperin, Markowitz, 1991).*

In 1987 Arbiter was selected as one of the national experts for President Reagan's White House Conference for a Drug Free America, Amity's leaders have testified before Congress and been named to White House panels (Phoenix New Times, 1996; Amity Inc., 2014a; Amity Inc., 2014b; Amity Foundation, 2014b). Arbiter is currently developing a comprehensive written curriculum for a six-month residential therapeutic community for male and female adult substance abusers with extensive criminal histories, who are under criminal justice (probation or parole) supervision (Amity Inc., 2014b). Amity's curriculum *"Includes introductory 12-step and basic family work"* (Amity Inc., 2014c). According to Extensions LLC, a consulting group founded by Arbiter (Extensions, 2014a), *"It is imperative that participants understand the positive relationships between 12 Step and TC modalities so they can avail themselves of the support from the 12 Step Community once they graduate from the TC."* (Extensions, 2014b). The Amity/Extensions curriculum is endorsed by former Synanon participant George De Leon, who, according to Extensions LLC, says that *"I have known Ms. Arbiter for more than 30 years"* (Extensions, 2014c). De Leon also acknowledges Naya Arbiter and Rod Mullen as *"individuals who were particularly helpful"* in his writing of *"The Therapeutic Community, Theory, Model and Method"* (De Leon, 2000: xvii-xviii).

According to the Phoenix New Times, *"In September 1994, Amity's top managers were told by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that the organization had improperly, and possibly illegally, spent about \$517,000 of federal money. This was a catastrophic mistake that forced drastic reductions in staff and programs. It was so serious that in November 1995 Amity filed for bankruptcy. Although two of Amity's three top managers have since resigned, the former leaders continue loudly to lay the blame for Amity's financial collapse on former members of Amity's board of directors. In fact, Amity's former executive director, Rod Mullen, and his wife, former deputy director Naya Arbiter, claim several former board members and their agents executed an elaborate scheme to destroy Amity and gain control of Amity's 53-acre ranch in east Tucson... ...The accusation has enraged and confounded many volunteer board members who have spent years helping Amity. Most say Amity's financial collapse was caused by Mullen's incompetent management. Thousands of pages of Amity documents—and Mullen's own statements—strongly support that view. So why raise such an outlandish accusation at this time? One reason might simply be money. Amity's financial collapse left Mullen and Arbiter unemployed. Their best hope for a job right now is landing a \$1 million-a-year California state grant to manage a drug-treatment program in a San Diego prison that Amity started in 1990. Part of the criteria for awarding the grant will be the financial acumen of the applicants"* (Phoenix New Times, 1996).

Amity appears to have overcome the financial difficulties reported in 1996, now having five projects in California, an office in Los Angeles and facilities in Arizona and New Mexico (Amity Foundation, 2014c). Rod Mullen is Amity's CEO (Amity Foundation, 2014d).

According to Amity's website, *"Amity's work received national attention in 1993, when U.S. Drug Czar Dr. Lee Brown visited Amity. During his visit, Dr. Brown called Amity's program for women and children "a model for this nation." Subsequently, he invited Amity staff to Washington D.C. to present to a report on, "The Efficacy of Providing Treatment to Hard Core Users: The Need for Drug Treatment for Women and Children." In 1993, Amity drew the attention of the President's Commission on Model State Drug Laws, which invited Amity to provide expert advice regarding recidivism and violence reduction in effective treatment programs. Two years later, in 1995, the national Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) asked Amity to present our findings on substance abuse treatment among women and children. Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno invited Amity in 1999 to conduct a plenary presentation to a national, specially-invited audience on the topic of "Women's Pathway to Criminality." Also in 1999, Amity was invited by the Mountain Health Service of North Carolina to conduct a weeklong workshop on, "Hope Starts With a Story: Women and Substance Abuse." Amity's expertise extends beyond the Washington D.C. Beltway and across the United States; our reputation and success have drawn attention from other nations. In 1995, several Amity senior staff were invited by the President of Argentina to travel to that South American country and provide advice on how to implement quality family-based substance abuse services. In 1999, the government of Japan invited Amity senior staff to spend two weeks traveling to eight cities to formally present how to implement Amity's treatment model. During their time in Japan, Amity's staff made a presentation the Japanese Diet - that nation's Congress - about policies relevant to addicted families. Students from Japan travel to the United States to spend time at Amity's projects as part of their university studies. Recently, one of the Republics formed in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union has contacted Amity and asked us to come to their nation and help them set up a program similar to Amity"*(Amity Foundation, 2014a).

In 2010, Rowdy Yates, George De Leon, Rod Mullen and Naya Arbiter co-authored *“Straw Men: Exploring the Evidence Base and the Mythology of the Therapeutic Community.”* The result of their exploration did not mention any evidence of Synanon, but found instead the myth that *“The roots of the modern drug-free therapeutic community (TC) movement lie in the mutual-aid fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous...”* (Yates, De Leon, Mullen & Arbiter, 2010).

Straight Inc., claimed its programme was based on the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps but closed in 1993 after facing seven-figure legal judgements for beatings and kidnapping of adult participants (Szalavitz, 2006:64, Surviving Straight Inc., 2014); the organisation’s educational arm, however, Straight Foundation Inc. continued to operate, changing its name to the Drug Free America Foundation Inc. in 1995 (Fager, 2000). The Drug Free America Foundation Inc. (DFAF) and Save Our Society from Drugs (SOS) were founded by Straight’s co-founders Mel Sembler and Betty Sembler (DFAF, 2014a; SOS, 2014a). According to the DFAF and Sembler websites, *“In 1976, Sembler and his wife Betty co-founded STRAIGHT, an adolescent drug treatment program. During its 17 years of existence, STRAIGHT successfully graduated more than 12,000 young people nationwide from its remarkable program”* (DFAF, 2014a; Sembler, 2014).

According to a support group of former inmates of this ‘remarkable program,’ *“Straight, Inc. claimed to have an astronomically high success rate and was supported by both the Reagan and Bush administrations. However, Straight, Inc. did not publicly reveal what many survivors will tell you. The REAL Straight, Inc. was a facility that used coercive thought reform (aka mind control, brainwashing), public humiliation, sleep & food deprivation, extremely harsh confrontational tactics, kidnapping, isolation and emotional, mental, psychological, verbal and physical abuse to forcibly break us down then remold us in the Straight, Inc. image. Straight, Inc. also operated in secrecy, just like a cult (Straight, Inc. has been listed on at least 2 cult expert websites). No outsiders were ever permitted to know what really went on. Straight’s rules and our fear of harsh punishment prevented us from talking to outsiders or from reporting abuses. Trying to survive Straight, Inc. devastated many of us. Some former clients have committed suicide. Others have serious disorders as a result of their time in Straight, Inc. For example, some of us suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, panic disorders and severe depression. In addition, many of us have experienced other long-term detrimental effects such as inability to function normally in relationships, fear of therapists or any form of counseling, severe distrust of people, paranoia, nightmares, etc. This is certainly not a complete list but does give one an inkling of the serious long-term adverse effects on survivors caused by Straight Inc”* (Surviving Straight Inc., 2014).

The missions of DFAF and SOS are to educate and work with national and international law makers, United Nations, and active grass-roots anti-drug coalitions, to enable laws to reduce drug addiction, support student and employee drug testing efforts, drug court programmes and to *“dispel misinformation related to current drug issues in the media.”* (DFAF, 2014b; SOS, 2014b). Divisions of DFAF are: The Institute on Global Drug Policy, The International Scientific and Medical Forum on Drug Abuse, The International Task Force on Strategic Drug Policy, The Drug Prevention Network of the Americas (DPNA), Students Taking Action Not Drugs (STAND) and National Drug-Free Workplace Alliance (NDWA), (DFAF, 2014b) According to the SOS website, *“Save Our Society From Drugs (S.O.S.) is a 501(c)(4) national nonprofit organization committed to establishing, promoting, and enabling sound drug laws and policies that will reduce illegal drug use, drug addiction and drug-related illness and death... ... We work to educate our nation’s lawmakers and activate grassroots anti-drug coalitions to combat drugs and the effects of drug use on our communities. S.O.S. advocates for abstinence-based drug prevention and treatment, and supports student and employee drug testing efforts, and drug court programs”* (SOS, 2014b).

### **3.2 Drug Courts, Coercion in the Justice System, and Court mandated attendance at A.A. meetings**

Drug court programmes, first introduced in Dade County, Florida in 1989, have since expanded to every state in the USA (Tiger, 2011:172), numbering more than 2,300 (Quinn, 2010). The claimed success by advocates of these experimental courts which combine the criminal justice system with medical treatment into a hybrid penal/therapeutic form has been called into question (Quinn, 2010; Tiger, 2011, 2013a). Despite the proliferation of juvenile drug courts, little empirical, qualitative, or critical research has been done on them (Hillier et al., 2010; Tiger, 2011:172). According to Tiger, *“some reports suggest that drug courts have not reduced, and in some places have actually increased, incarceration for drug offenses. In some jurisdictions, defendants who start but do not complete drug court may face longer sentences than if they had bypassed drug court altogether”* (Tiger, 2013a:26).

In their examination of a drug court programme in a Mid-western county, Gowan and Whetstone found that “one year after the implementation of the county’s first drug court in 1997, drug crime prosecutions rose by 50 percent, and have continued to climb. As we watched clients returned by the court for their third, 12th, and even 18th attempt at rehab, the purported cure looked more like a revolving door. Certainly many of the clients saw the institution as just another form of incarceration” (Gowan, Whetstone, 2012:86, 87). According to Quinn, “Of the 117 drug court evaluations that had been completed by 2005, in part with federal dollars, the GAO [Government Accounting Office] found that only 27 were methodologically sound. And even within this sampling, ‘evidence about the effectiveness of drug court programs in reducing participants’ substance abuse’ was ‘limited and mixed’” (Quinn, 2010).

According to Gowan and Whetstone, the increasingly intimate relationship of the TC movement with the criminal justice system may have reinforced the confrontational and authoritarian characteristics of the original TC:

***“From utopian cult to satellite prison***

*The strongly custodial character of most inner-city rehab facilities has become increasingly taken-for-granted. Yet the vast majority of these institutions developed in emulation of a very different institutional form – the ‘therapeutic community’ (TC) of Synanon, a radical utopian experiment that emerged in the late 1950s out of the intense counter-cultural synergy of Venice, California. Founder Charles Dederich, a passionate member of Alcoholics Anonymous, developed the principles and intensive group work of AA meetings into a full-time residential community, a place where addicts could heal their ‘flawed personalities’ through intensive mutual discipline and support. The ‘anticriminal societies’ of Dederich’s Synanon and other TCs blended moral and therapeutic discourse, using powerfully confrontational group therapy to effect a moral transformation (De Leon, 2000; Sugarman, 1974; Yablonsky, 1962, 1965).*

*Beginning in the early 1960s, therapeutic communities started to admit former inmates, forging ties with parole and probation programs – but in the mid-1970s, Synanon spearheaded a radical shift. Rather than sending ex-offenders there to reintegrate, judges were heeding Synanon house sociologist Yablonsky’s plea to reconceptualize the criminal as a criminal-addict who could be better reformed through the principles of the therapeutic community (Yablonsky, 1965). Synanon and other TCs started to be treated as an alternative custodial option (Kaye, 2010).*

*Strong-arm rehab was born, but the increasingly intimate relationship with the State required some mitigation of the TCs’ lack of professional hierarchy, extraordinary shaming rituals and untrammelled moralism. The new institutions were still primarily staffed by former addicts (De Leon, 2000), but states now mandated counselor training using the ‘cognitive behavioral therapy’ (CBT) approach spreading across prison rehabilitation programs (Carlen, 2005; Kendall, 2002). The CBT principle of reorienting faulty thinking by combining tight social control with strong messages of individual responsibility may have cleaned up some of the more spectacular hazing and other idiosyncrasies of the Synanon era, but it also gave mainstream scientific legitimacy to the essence of the process. Bringing the TC model closer in line with criminological practice was the ‘criminal thinking’ curriculum (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976) introduced in both fields in the 1970s (Broekaert et al., 2004; De Leon, 1995).*

*The incorporation of more mainstream psychological terminology and practices shifted some rehab facilities away from the confrontational moral re-education of the earlier years. On the most elite end of the spectrum, clients in beachside resorts now receive massage, acupuncture, specialized nutrition, and daily individual therapy. Yet the influence of professional psychology and medicine is far less evident in the TCs serving poor and working class clients. As our own case suggests, an increasingly intimate relationship with the criminal justice system may have even reinforced the confrontational and authoritarian characteristics of the original TC” (Gowan, Whetstone, 2012: 74; original emphasis).*

*“What we can say now is that the binary culture of the therapeutic community forced clients into a harsh double bind. On one hand, they could force themselves to submit to the program, suppressing any sense of injury and ultimately collaborating with the system holding their lives at ransom. On the other, they could split themselves into two, superficially ‘talking the talk’, but holding apart a more authentic self allowed no verbal expression within the facility. Our interviews suggested that many of the clients floated ambivalently between these two poles, convinced in some ways, skeptical in others, and often deeply confused” (Gowan, Whetstone, 2012:85).*

The observations made by Gowan and Whetstone of the TC-drug court programme which “forced clients into a harsh double bind” in which they could submit to collaborating with the system or “they could split themselves into two” and the clients’ symptoms of being “often deeply confused” appear to parallel the symptoms of psychiatric injury

known as “*doubling*” or “*divided self*” that are found in casualties of thought reform programmes (Lalich, Tobias, 2006:47; Langone, 1993:153; Tobias, Lalich, 1994:46; Singer, 2003:78). The following are excerpts of writing by Ofshe, Singer, Hassan and Lalich which may give the reader a very brief but incomplete understanding of “*doubling*” and the “*double bind*.”

*“Second-generation thought reform programs expose participants to exercises and experiences that disrupt psychological defense systems, causing some individuals to be flooded with emotions and others to dissociate and split off parts of their awareness... .. The majority reaction seen in people who leave thought reform programs, almost regardless of the time spent with the group, is a varying degree of anomie - a sense of alienation and confusion resulting from the loss or weakening of previously valued norms, ideals, or goals”* (Singer, Ofshe 1990). *“The effectiveness of a thought-reform program can also be enhanced through use of the ‘double bind’ technique. This emotional cul-de-sac is defined in Merriam-Webster as a ‘psychological predicament in which a [usually dependent] person receives from a single source conflicting messages that allow no appropriate response to be made’. Often a cult member faces disparagement no matter what he does. The double bind imparts a message of hopelessness; you’re damned if you do and you’re damned if you don’t”* (Lalich, Tobias, 2006:45). *“A double bind forces a person to do what the controller wants while giving an illusion of choice”* (Hassan, 1990:68). *“A dramatic change of identity is required in order for a person to adapt to the high level of cognitive dissonance that may be present in a cult. Lifton identified this adaptation device as doubling. Doubling is the formation of a second self that lives side by side within the former one, often for a considerable time”* (Lalich, Tobias, 2006:47). *“The phenomenon has been variously described as doubling, or as the formation of a pseudopersonality (or pseudoidentity), a superimposed identity, a cult self, or a cult personality”* (Singer, 2003:78).

Evident in the TC-drug court programme examined by Gowan and Whetstone is the TC’s affiliation with Alcoholics Anonymous.

*“...its 60–120 day program combining elements of intensive behavioral modification, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, family therapy, and ‘life skills’ development... ..A few walls sported motivational posters or Alcoholics Anonymous material. Most prominent, though, was ‘the board’, bearing constantly updated lists of clients, room assignments, house tasks, and currently sanctioned individuals... ..Paralleling AA’s ‘first step’, Arcadia immediately required that each client publicly and wholeheartedly accept the status of addict. The counselors vigorously pushed new clients to testify that using drugs had fueled a pathological loss of selfcontrol and that they were inflamed by insatiable hungers... ..In interviews, however, participants expressed a broad ambivalence about drug use (and dealing) and substantial anger at the invasion of ‘the system’ into every aspect of their lives. These frustrations seemed likely to fuel those spectacular returns to Dionysian abandon described so often in inner-city AA meetings... ..As graduate Tim told us, I think with regard to both Arcadia and the Big Book philosophy... ..Beyond the endless exhortations to attend AA meetings daily, the system mostly facilitated this kind of quarantine in a strictly repressive way, in that the drug court prohibited some men from returning to live with their families”* (Gowan, Whetstone, 2012:75,76, 85, 86).

According to Tiger, *“The result of the medicalization of addiction and the criminalization of drug use has made for an uneasy alliance between the treatment and criminal justice systems. For example, the criminal justice system is the largest single source of referral to publicly funded drug treatment”* (Tiger, 2013b:4).

*“Drug courts are a hybrid criminal and therapeutic court. Addicts are mandated to rehabilitation based on the idea that they are sick with addiction that is, in large part, the cause of their criminal behaviour. And yet, if they repeatedly fail to be transformed by the court-mandated treatment, they are then processed as rational, culpable adults and sentenced accordingly... ..Children and addicts are distinct groups who are not wholly responsible for their crimes. And yet the increasingly punitive approach to young offenders as well as the hybrid punitive and rehabilitative approach to drug court defendants, who will most likely end up in prison if they cannot remain sober, suggests that these ideologies are as contradictory as the practices to which we subject young and addicted offenders”* (Tiger, 2013a:50).

*“Drug courts combine punitive and rehabilitative approaches in one punishment form. They do not fit neatly into the bifurcated nature of punishment depicted by scholars. Drug courts do expand penal control via judicial discretion and heavy defendant monitoring, but do so in ways that explicitly draw on the language of rehabilitation”* (Tiger, 2013a:56).

*“Rather than punishing a specific criminal act that has happened in the past, a traditional role for courts, drug courts are focused on curing a specific condition, that of addiction, and affecting future action... .. The court, then, becomes concerned with behaviors that are not necessarily illegal but that courts stake their claim over in the name of recovery”* (Tiger, 2011:173).

*“Judges interact with defendants differently than in traditional criminal court. They inquire about children, jobs, romantic relationships, and plans for education, comment on defendants’ appearances, or scold them for inappropriate language. They offer a “tough love” approach to defendants, being both judge, with power to punish, but also a type of “case manager” or “therapeutic administrator” (Tiger, 2013a:15).*

*“In drug courts, the judge and other court staff are always assessing the defendant’s commitment to treatment and amenability to change” (Tiger, 2013a:19).*

*“Drug courts collect very personal information on the defendants, which is considered essential to the courts’ success. Sociologists Stacey Burns and Mark Peyrot, in their ethnography of two drug courts in Southern California, emphasize the dual nature of this personalized information. Its goal is to convey caring, to show that the court is committed to the defendant’s recovery, but it is also a way that defendants are held accountable to the court. It is part of the “mentoring and monitoring”. Function of the drug court. The individualized information that judges collect can be used to craft meaningful rewards but also particularly effective sanctions. The personal information, combined with strict monitoring, is used to determine the defendant’s progress in the drug courts, measured in stages. These stages, ranging from the trial orientation phase to graduation, can take years for a defendant to complete. As the defendant progresses through these stages, the monitoring becomes less intense. They can also be demoted back to earlier stages if they do not comply with treatment. During these stages, the judge often uses jail as an “extension of recovery” and a form of “behaviour modification”. As one judge they interviewed explained, sanctions are “supposed to put that kind of torture and fear and whatever else is unpleasant in your memory so that when you do cross that trigger again, you really remember... ..The behaviour modification thing... is basically pleasure and pain.” An important aspect to drug courts is that the judges show that they care about defendants. They recommend sanctions for “dirty urines.” They take into account participants’ commitment to sobriety. Judges praise cajole, reprimand, and lecture drug court participants. Sometimes they hug them. They remind them that sobriety is difficult to achieve but that actions, such as “slip ups,” have consequences, which can range from court admonishments to brief stints in jail to years in prison. These consequences remind defendants that they are in control. They might be sick with a disease, a compulsive relationship with drugs, but its cure rests with them and their commitment to the hard work of sobriety. Some defendants, unable to convince the judge of this commitment, end up in prison. Having pled guilty to get into the drug court, they have a certain prison sentence waiting for them when they fail to achieve sobriety”(Tiger, 2013a:19).*

*“...drug courts use a variety of sanctions to punish noncompliance and incentives to reward progress. Sanctions offer a “swift and coordinated response to noncompliance” that is “immediate, of increasing severity and predictable”(NDCI, 2000). Sanctions can include public warnings in the courtroom, increased frequency of drug testing, fines, jail and, finally, termination from the program (and a certain prison sentence). Rewards can include public praise from the judge, ceremonies marking advancement to the next treatment phase, a decrease in the frequency of required court appearances, and graduation from the program” (Tiger, 2011:172).*

*“In making their case for coercion, drug courts emphasize the role that coercion plays in the therapeutic setting. It is at the level of cure — at the level of treatment — where drug courts make an intervention and they make coercion the main feature of that intervention. Drug court advocates argue that “force is the best medicine.” An “evidence-based” approach, they claim, shows us that addicts need coercion. Further, they argue, “the empirical data on drug treatment programs unequivocally ... support ... this proposition” — that coercion is the key to rehabilitation — and that “voluntary treatment is wildly less successful than coerced treatment.” As one advocate explained: “an addict... ..they need to be coerced, they need carrots, they need sticks, in order to stay about new behaviors.” While, according to this model, addicts are sick, they are also in control of their disease and this control can be enhanced through sanctions and incentives imposed by the court” (Tiger, 2011:176.)*

*“Despite the deep historical precedents for coerced treatment, drug court advocates speak, almost uniformly, as if these courts represent a radically new approach to addressing criminal offenders. The advocates I interviewed believe that drug courts are the right way for the criminal justice system to deal with drug users. They see these courts as unprecedented, revolutionary, and visionary. Because they speak with an almost monolithic voice about these courts, they do not, with a few exceptions, engage seriously with the critiques that were lodged against, and led in part to the demise of, their Progressive Era predecessor courts. Unquestionably believing that drug courts are better than prison, and viewing prison as the only other way to deal with drug offenders, the advocates I interviewed dismissed any serious consideration that judges, with greatly expanded powers, might use these powers in potentially dangerous ways” (Tiger, 2011:180).*

*“Drug court advocates call their work “enlightened coercion” (Satel, 2000), enlightened because they’re drawing on what proponents call the “psychopharmacological science’ or, alternatively, the “neuroscience of addiction.” As*

one advocate explained: “Neuroscience has come so far in the last ten years that unless you’re a ‘Neanderthal’ you’ll understand what the science tells you about the hijacked brain...the effects that [these] drugs have on the pleasure centers of the brain” (Tiger, 2011:174).

“Drug court advocates use the science about the effects of drugs on the brain to articulate a disease model of addiction that focuses more broadly on its treatment. As one advocate pointed out, “drug courts would be unimaginable without this growing assumption that... addiction is a disease and it can be treated.” It is a condition in which “relapse is inevitable” and whose ultimate cure requires “long-term, intensive assistance.” It is also a disease that, because it affects the pleasure centers, people do not want to necessarily be cured from. So, what drug courts offer, in the words of one proponent, is “the coercive power to get people into treatment who don’t want it. And to keep people there who don’t want to stay there” (Tiger, 2011:174). “As an advocate explained: “For an addict, we’re asking them to change everything — their friendships, how they see themselves in the world, their family dynamic, their hangouts, down to the music they listen to and how they dress” (Tiger, 2011:174).

“Recent evaluations of drug court evaluations stand in stark contrast to the positive reports presented by their evaluator-advocates. A recent meta-analysis of drug court studies, funded by the Drug Policy Alliance, summarizing the results of the five-year Multi-site Adult Drug Court Evaluation, explains that drug court participation did not lead to a statistically significant reduction in rearrest, despite strong claims for this finding in the Center for Court Innovation’s studies. Further, this report claims that “incarceration sanctions” – considered by many advocates to be an important component of drug court success – are associated with a lower probability of program completion, in part because “a person’s sense of autonomy and motivation – integral to progress in treatment – can be undermined if they feel they sanctioned unfairly. Further, some reports suggest that drug courts have not reduced, and in some places have actually increased, incarceration for drug offenses. In some jurisdictions, defendants who start but do not complete drug court may face longer sentences than if they had bypassed drug court altogether. With completion rates ranging from 30% to 70% nationally, this suggests that a significant number of one-time drug court participants will end up incarcerated. Combined with the use of jail as a “treatment tool,” drug courts’ claim as an alternative to incarceration is called into question with these findings” (Tiger, 2012:26).

“In this conclusion I argue that force is not the best medicine. The marriage of punishment and treatment is a failed one; it is time for a divorce. This marriage did not work in the progressive era, it does not work now, and it will not work in the future” (Tiger, 2013a:134).

“Rather than reforming the failures of the war on drugs, these courts permit increased social control of defendants in the name of healing and punishing them” (Tiger, 2014).

### 3.3 Effect of Court mandated attendance on A.A.

Court mandated attendance to A.A. meetings has proven controversial within and outside A.A. Some A.A. groups refused to participate in signing court mandated slips (Kurtz, 1999:17). In some areas of the USA, the influx of convicts caused disruption and disunity to A.A. groups. Case examples are Michigan, Area 32, where “There is growing evidence of problems at meeting groups expressed quite loudly in Area 32 districts and other locations. The problems we hear are generally about individuals disrupting meetings in various ways in and outside of our host facilities” (A.A. Michigan Area 32, CPC- Position report, July 13, 2008) and in Maryland, where court mandated attendance dates back to 1978. The following are extracts from a Maryland General Service report in 1987; (“D.W.I.” is an acronym for Driving While Impaired).

“Maryland was, as far as we know, where the signing of court slips in A.A. meetings first began. We have had nearly nine years of experience with court slips, from the first solitary D.W.I. in 1978 to many thousands in recent years. Our experience has gone from early euphoria at “so many new-comers” to concern, frustration, dissension, and finally, to a general realization that our survival was threatened. In this report, we’ll share our recent experiences with court-directed D.W.I. offenders, and actions that were taken by our Area General Service structure... We believe that other A.A. Areas could be affected as we were. We hope that those Areas may benefit from our experience: that is our primary purpose here... The majority of D.W.I.’s were required to get signatures at five A.A. meetings per week. Some needed only one per week. We estimate that the average was at least three times a week, which translates to an aggregate of more than 42,000 D.W.I.s in our meetings each week (This adds up to more than 2,100,000 slip signatures per year by Group secretaries) Total A.A. population in Maryland is 13,000. Pressure in some areas was much greater than even these numbers indicate. Certain areas were targets for D.W.I. crackdowns. A.A. Groups in and around those locations were inundated. Most rural communities were barely affected by the

court slip problem... ...Problems became so severe that in January, 1986 the Maryland Area Committee shifted responsibility for D.W.I.-related matters from its C.P.C. Committee to the Area Delegate and Area Chairman. They became responsible for all liaisons with the state, the D.W.I monitor system, and with all A.A. entities in the Area... ...For several years, there had been a bitter debate throughout Maryland A.A. about whether the signing of court slips violated A.A. Traditions: specifically Traditions Six (Long Form) and Ten. We had a minority group operating vigorously in accord with A.A. Concepts. They and their adherents used every opportunity to speak out in opposition to the court slips. Area Committee Meetings, Assemblies and Intergroup Meetings were continually disrupted by acrimonious debate. Most G.S.R.s, after attending their first Area Assembly, vowed never to return. The business of A.A.'s Third Legacy of Service was brought to a virtual halt. Unity in Maryland A.A. had almost completely disappeared. Also, the great majority of our A.A. meetings were in disarray - our Common Welfare was in deep trouble. Thus, it was in the principles stated in our First Tradition, that our Area's priorities became clear. Here are some of the ways in which our Common Welfare was being damaged: A great many of our Groups were experiencing severe crowding conditions. Space, which had accommodated regular attendees, could not contain the flood of D.W.I. bodies. Meeting rooms were packed from wall to wall. They suffered all the possible discomforts of too many people crammed into too small a space. Fire laws were being broken. Noise levels were disruptive. In many cases, speakers were not heard and the meeting purpose was lost. The presence of so many D.W.I.'s was, in many other ways, an ominous one. Few of them had any desire to be there other than to have slips signed at the end of the meeting. Many of them resented us, considering A.A. a part of the state's punitive system. Most of them cared little for what was going on and not at all for the others who were there. The D.W.I.'s had no conception of nor regard for A.A. anonymity. Details of personal A.A. stories, together with names, were broadcast throughout the community - e.g., into schools where A.A. members taught. In many meetings, A.A. women were intimidated and felt unable to share personal stories and/or problems in the presence of D.W.I.'s. Ministers of several churches in Maryland were expressing great distress at the chaos, damage and thefts of church property traceable to D.W.I.'s. Stories began to appear in major newspapers headlining descriptions by ministers of discarded drug paraphernalia, bottles and other debris in connection with A.A. meetings. Some churches evicted Groups from their long-time meeting places. A number of others were threatening to do so "if A.A. did not clean up its act with D.W.I.'s". The exodus of old-timers from A.A. meetings had accelerated. They felt that, because of the D.W.I.'s, our A.A. meetings had deteriorated to the point where they were no longer enhancing recovery. Also, newcomers from sources other than the courts were lost in the shuffle. And behavior of D.W.I.'s in and around our meetings was worsening. A.A. Groups were going underground. More and more members were deciding to avoid D.W.I.'s and the controversy surrounding them. The times and locations of these meetings were known only to invited attendees. Tangible cooperation from state functionaries was almost non-existent, even though our C.P.C. Chairman, Delegate and Area Chairman were in frequent contact with them. We used every means to make them aware of our problems and the need for solutions. At one point, they promised that some very large state-conducted meetings would be initiated in several armories, to relieve the pressure. Like other promises, it has never been kept. These, then, have been some of the problems experienced throughout the Maryland Area of A.A. There have been a variety of other problems, some unique to local situations; these have been as disruptive and damaging as the ones described above. It was clear that if the situation was allowed to continue irreparable harm could be done to the program of recovery in Maryland. Therefore the Delegate made a decision to make known the facts, as well as his opinions, and to bring them before the Fellowship. At the end of April 1986 Area Committee meeting, the Delegate presented his report of the problems being caused by the court slip program throughout the Maryland Area. He followed his presentation with a proposed resolution that "henceforth our cooperation with the state would only be to the extent of providing speakers for large D.W.I. meetings hosted and conducted by the state." That would, in effect, terminate all cooperation by the Area Service structure in the signing of court slips. After the discussion, the Area committee voted, by a margin of 52 to 2, to support the Delegate's suggested resolution, and recommended that it be brought before the following Area Assembly... ...The process of informing was carried over to the May 17 Assembly itself... ...Following the open sharing session the vote was taken. The tally was 154 to 57 in favor of the Delegate's proposal on D.W.I.s. That is that Area cooperation would be limited to the providing of speakers for special D.W.I. meetings organized and monitored by the state... ...A very small minority of the Groups in the Maryland Area, less than 10%, has yet to follow the Area Group Conscience; they continue to sign court slips. A new problem has arisen: state employees who are also A.A. members have started new "groups" solely for the purpose of signing D.W.I. court slips. They give every evidence of being affiliated with the state, yet they seek A.A. recognition. Further, nothing can be learned about whether or not they are self-supporting..."(A.A. Maryland General Service Office, Waldorf, 1987a).

The Drink Driving Monitor program (D.D.M.P.) responded to the Maryland A.A. group conscience with a



declared intention to continue sending court slips to Maryland A.A. meetings, for as long as a sufficient number of groups signed court slips, despite being *“told that the Maryland A.A. Group Conscience, acting according to our Traditions, wished to make no further accommodation for court slips”* (A.A. Maryland General Service Office, Waldorf, 1987b). However, the letter also informed the A.A. groups of a possibly viable alternative to court slips in the use of an *“Honor System”* which could be used in areas where not enough groups were willing to sign court slips, *“the D.D.M.P. supervisor was asked if the Honor System would become universal. She said it would definitely not – that it was designed as a “band aid” approach to be used in areas where not enough groups sign slips. She said the Honor System required an increase in monitoring time which would add to monitoring expense. We told her that was not A.A.’s concern. She agreed otherwise the Honor System was probably in ways superior to the slip system”* (A.A. Maryland General Service Office, Waldorf, 1987b).

The formation of hybrid State-TC-AA groups does not appear to be confined to Maryland. In a multi-site study of Juvenile Drug Courts in Kentucky, funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, and the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts (Hillier et al., 2010:214), all court teams in the study expressed the intention to start an AA group for their youth (Hillier et al., 2010:226). *“All teams responded that they wanted to continue to improve the court program by adding additional treatment options, which included starting an AA group for their youth, developing mentoring programs, providing parenting skills training, and “teaching kids who they are” by adding more culturally specific programming. Funding was another issue that emerged during this part of the discussion, with most courts uncertain as to how they would sustain themselves once grants had been expended”* (Hillier et al., 2010:226).

The counterfeiting of the A.A. programme in Synanon TC-drug court programmes appears to have led to some alcoholics to being coerced into automatic compliance with the TC-State alliance in ways which go well beyond that of signing of court slips. A case example is that of the hybrid “mentor-sponsor” informant in Eastern Massachusetts, whose reporting of a court mandated newcomer, resulted in her losing custody of her children. *“Amanda’s history with Twelve Step programs most likely contributes to her ambivalence. She first attended AA/NA when she was in her 20s and the DSS ordered her to go as a condition for her to maintain custody of her children. Amanda recalls with anger that at one point, her AA sponsor (someone who volunteers to act as a guide or mentor as an individual works through the Twelve Steps) called DSS and told them that Amanda had checked herself into a detoxification program. As a result of that call, DSS removed her children for 3 months and worse — according to Amanda — “even separated them from each other”* (Sered, Norton-Hawk, 2011:320).

A.A. newcomers’ automatic compliance in signing court slips, and the question of where these slips may end up after signing, with resultant breaking of anonymity, continued in Maryland in 2008, the chair of the Public Information Committee sharing her experience and concern in the A.A. Maryland newsletter:

*“This message is to a shared experience only. It is not an inventory on how to tackle the subject of court slips, or whether it is right or wrong if a group conscience vote allows or disallows the signing of these slips.*

*As a newcomer I was not aware of the large amount of bitter debates and controversy that happened in the late 80’s regarding court slips and A.A. meetings, nor the growth of D.W.I. programs and related problems it had caused. Upon my arrival to A.A. in January of 2003 these debates, from where I stood, had been put to bed and group conscience votes had taken care of the issue. My first home group signed court slips and within my first year of being a sober member of this group I did as the group asked and signed slips. When I stepped down as Secretary I no longer had to sign court slips and never really thought much about the subject again. Today, however, I see newcomers doing as I did in signing the court slips without question or concern.*

*Recently I had an opportunity to get a first hand look at how court slips are used. It made me wonder how many newcomers who go along with what is accepted group practice, know or understand what happens to those innocent little slips.*

*While working at my job one day, I had the opportunity to view thirteen pages of court slips along with legal documents from a probation officer regarding a person who was trying to get a state license. State licenses are more than just driver licenses– there are many types of license that need state approval, i.e., medical board, contractors, etc. Actually, most anything that a person can be sued for while doing a job requires background checks. I was very surprised at what I was reading– not the content, but that it found its way to my work desk. This professional had been convicted of a violent crime, spent a few years in prison and wanted a license to practice his skill. My job was to hear his appeal. This person went to A.A. groups for three years having court slips signed. The groups supplied all the information that was requested by this professional along with the name and address of the group, the full name of the secretary and date of the meeting. Did the person signing the slip know where this information would end up? This is my question and reason for writing. As an eagernewcomer, who has gladly signed slips, would I have*

wanted a slip that I had signed to appear on my boss's desk? This is the question and NO is the answer. I protect my anonymity today, and should have at that time, but I was only instructed to sign and had no idea as to the bigger picture and where these slips might land. My wish is to provoke some thought when you are presented with a court slip to sign. Where is it going to end up, and who may someday see the slip with YOUR name on it? A question you may want to ask yourself" (A.A. Maryland, Area 29 Newsletter, 2008).

Controversy surrounding court mandated attendance to A.A. meetings has brought A.A. into widespread public controversy. In 2010, Hawaii, an Iraq veteran court mandated to A.A. who had a history of mental illness and violence against women, shot and killed a female A.A. member and her daughter, whom he had met at A.A., before he committed suicide (Honolulu Star Advertiser 2010; Propublica.org, 2013). In 2011, Santa Clarita, a man court mandated to A.A., who had a known history of violence, was charged with the murder of Karla Menendez, whom he met at an A.A. meeting, *"the Mendez family in September 2012 filed a civil suit against Alcoholics Anonymous of Santa Clarita and Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, and several other defendants, contending that AA had a "reckless disregard for, and deliberate indifference...to the safety and security of victims attending AA meetings who are repeatedly preyed upon at those meetings by financial, violent, and sexual predators like Earle"* (Propublica.org, 2013). In 2012, Montana, a sex offender, court mandated to A.A., was sent to gaol after preying on women in A.A. (Propublica.org, 2013; Lake County Leader, 2012).

In 2014, A.A. reached the national press when professional footballer Greg Hardy, player for the Carolina Panthers, was court mandated to attend three A.A. meetings per week after being convicted of domestic violence against his girlfriend. The high profile case involving public scandal over the National Football League's handling of players who have been convicted of domestic violence and Hardy's sentence to attend A.A. has been widely reported (Chicago Tribune, 2014; CBC News, 2014; Sports Illustrated, 2014; Time Magazine, 2014). According to an article in 'Sports Illustrated', *"If the chilling Rice video graphically demonstrates what domestic abuse looks like then Hardy's situation exposes other angles of domestic violence. It opens a window into how an assault can unfold, how high profile cases play out and why a victim might be reluctant to testify against an alleged abuse... ...A judge issued a protective order and ordered him to attend three Alcoholics Anonymous meetings per week"* (Sports Illustrated, 2014:50,51). According UK press, Hardy, *"convicted of strangling, beating and threatening to kill his girlfriend has appealed against his conviction"*(Daily Mail, 2014), the appeal was to be heard in Court on November 17, 2014 (The Independent, 2014).

In 2014, AA was brought into public controversy alongside a judge with ties to drug and alcohol testing companies. The judge ordered defendants *"to undergo long stretches of alcohol and drug testing, therapy and mandatory Alcoholics Anonymous meetings — despite committing minor misdemeanors."* It was found that *"The judge's wife is the paid executive director of the Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals, a nonprofit organization that receives thousands of dollars annually from the drug- and alcohol-testing companies... ...his son worked for 16 months at Jail Alternative for Michigan Services, known as JAMS, the largest drug- and alcohol-testing company in metro Detroit."*(Detroit Free Press, 2014). In one case, the judge *"ordered a law school graduate with no criminal conviction to submit to six months of drug and alcohol testing, intensive therapy and mandatory AA meetings."* The judge *"denies any conflict of interest"* (Detroit Free Press, 2014).

Cases of appeal against court mandated attendance to A.A. have led to some U.S. Courts ruling A.A. to be religious. In 2007, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled that requiring a parolee to attend A.A. violates the First Amendment, *"Rulings from across the nation since 1996 have established that "requiring a parolee to attend religion-based treatment programs violates the First Amendment," the court said. "While we in no way denigrate the fine work of (Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous), attendance in their programs may not be coerced by the state."* (San Francisco Chronicle, 2007).

Some recently published studies of court mandated attendance to A.A. show negative outcomes for A.A. when compared to other "mutual aid" groups as a treatment option. A three year study of court mandated women in Eastern Massachusetts suggested that *"coerced participation in AA/NA undermines any potential value that these programs may have for other types of participants and... ...that many of the women see AA/NA as reinscribing the negative interpersonal interactions that make up their lives more broadly. Some of them chafe at being forced to attend meetings"* (Sered, Norton-Hawk, 2011:308,310). In a south western state, a 15-year study of follow-up interviews with 82 individuals arrested for driving while intoxicated found that *"The most commonly criticized court-mandated intervention by respondents in this study was Alcoholics Anonymous and similar 12-step programs. They were least prone to being "liked" and/or considered beneficial, and interviewees had largely negative feelings about their mandates to attend AA... ...It appeared that the main objection to attending AA was that it was not a personal choice, but rather a forced one. Because the court required so many offenders to attend meetings, this*

meant that AA was a place that included people who were not committed to sobriety, but were merely complying with a court order” (Lapham, England-Kennedy, 2012:24,25).

The gradual and increasing rate of slowdown in A.A. growth since the mid-1980s appears to correlate with the TC movement’s policy change toward Alcoholics Anonymous, the integration of Synanon TC philosophy with the A.A. Twelve Steps in addiction treatment, 12-Step Facilitation, Drug Court mandated attendance to A.A. and associated negative publicity. Despite the number of alcoholics mandated and “facilitated” to A.A. by professionals, official A.A. membership estimates indicate that over the last twenty years as many alcoholics have left A.A. as have joined. Since 2001, A.A. membership has remained static at around 2.1-2.2 million members worldwide:

2,160,013 members in 2001  
2,215,293 members in 2002  
2,138,421 members in 2014  
2,040,629 members in 2015  
2,089,698 members in 2016

There appear to be around 70,000 fewer A.A. members today than there were in 2001. (A.A. World Services Inc., Box 4-5-9, News and Notes from G.S.O, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016).

### 3.4 Drug Court Advocacy in A.A.

The main drug court advocacy in the U.S., the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) (Tiger, 2013a:20) has recently begun a campaign to increase funding of drug courts called “All Rise” (Tiger, 2013a:22). A facilitator for the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI), Judge Rogelio Flores, was elected a Class A (non-alcoholic) trustee of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in 2007 (A.A. World Services Inc., 2007; Noozhawk.com, 2012). In 2008, Flores was also elected to the NADCP board of directors (Nooshawk.com, 2012; NADCP, 2009). Flores, a “firm believer in the drug courts” (Santa Maria Times, 2012) was a panelist at the 2005 A.A. international convention in Toronto, Canada, where he presented a workshop on how A.A. and the ‘therapeutic courts’ cooperate (A.A. World Services Inc., 2007). The NDCI is an affiliate of NADCP and is supported by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the U.S. Department of Justice (NDCI, 2014). In 2014, NADCP celebrated 25 years of “success” reporting that “*Drug Courts received a record appropriation of \$95.9 Million at a time when federal funding increases are near impossible*” (NADCP, 2014). At the Santa Maria Drug Court and Veterans Treatment Court Graduation in 2013, “*As soon as the graduation was over the guests spilled out into the courtyard for a reception. Judge Flores strapped on his electric bass and joined three other judges on a makeshift stage. Together they form Class Action, a rock band steeped in the classics. They played, people danced; a community basking in sunshine and well earned solidarity*” (NADCP, ‘All Rise America! Blog’, 2013).

### 3.5 Drug Courts and coercive referral to A.A. in the UK

A “Confirmation of Attendance” or “Chit System” was endorsed by the A.A. General Service Conference, Great Britain, in 1987 and 2009 (A.A. Probation Handbook, 2011:9). According to the Handbook, “*It was approved by Conference and set up to allow people on probation to show their Probation Officer that they are attending AA meetings. Its use has been taken up by some other external bodies, like Social Services where the custody or care of children is perhaps dependent on a person tackling their alcohol-related problem. Some parts of the UK have got the ‘chit’ system in place, and others have not yet gone along that road: it’s a matter for each Group’s conscience*” (A.A. Probation Handbook, 2011:6). The handbook notes, but also dismisses, the following minority opinion: “*Experience has shown that a minority of members will object strongly to the concept of the chit system, often incorrectly arguing that it contravenes our tradition of anonymity... ...Another argument that is often raised is that by having a confirmation system we are doing more than co-operating with the Probation Service and other organisations... ...Some members will argue that “undesirable elements” will be “sent” to AA meetings against their will and therefore may be disruptive...*” (A.A. Probation handbook, 2011:9ii). The ‘incorrectness’ of the minority opinion is, of course, a matter of divided opinion within the fellowship. Concept V states that “*minorities frequently can be right*” and the majority misguided, especially if it is “*uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry*” (A.A. Service Manual, 2015:20). Beside the Tradition of Anonymity, there are eleven other Traditions to consider. According to

Professor Sered, University of Boston, experience in the USA indicates that *“For women on parole or probation, verification of meeting attendance often is required. When study women need to ask meeting secretaries to sign papers attesting to their attendance, they not only lose the trademark AA/NA anonymity but also are forced to present themselves as subordinate, dependent members of the group”* (Sered, Norton-Hawk, 2011:320).

Thirteen years after the probation 'chit system' was first endorsed by Conference, the Conference found it necessary to publish a “Conduct of AA Members Discussion Document” concerning the growing number of police investigations into the behaviour of a minority of A.A. members. The following are extracts from the introduction to the seven page discussion document.

*“As most of you will know, there have been a growing number of Police investigations into the behaviour of a minority of our members and this can no longer be ignored. . . . The document which you have in front of you shows that awareness of this type of problem has been brought to the attention of Conference many times. Most emphatically it was brought to Conference 1995, 1996 and 1998... ..This document encompasses the whole spectrum of inappropriate behaviour from disrespectful social interaction to criminal conduct...*

*...It is with regret that the Board has to report on a problem which is threatening to damage our Fellowship and which requires the immediate attention of Conference and the Fellowship...*

*...There appears to be a growing number of cases from around the country of police (and other agency) involvement in allegations of unlawful sexual conduct by AA members. In some cases, there has been disregard for telephone service guidelines and in others there has been simply gross disrespect for others. Isolated press reports are appearing in local newspapers and, unless we take action quickly, it will only be a matter of time before the national news media decide to investigate AA. As part of our service to the Fellowship, we must protect newcomers and stay out of public controversy...*” (A.A. General Service Conference (GB) Final Report 2000:12,13). The discussion document may be read in full at <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/download/1/Library/Documents/Conference%20Reports%20and%20Background/Conference%202000/Conference%202000%20Final%20Report.pdf>

The outcome of the discussions was the introduction of two new group guidelines in 2002, No.16 ‘Violence’ and No. 17 ‘Personal Conduct Matters’, advising members on how to deal with violence and other anti-social behaviour.

While advocates of the probation 'Chit System' may find that there is no evidence to suggest that increasing reports of violence and other antisocial behaviour in A.A. have any connection to coercive referral of convicts via the chit system, equally there appears to be no evidence to suggest that these are not connected. They are at the very least, coincidental.

In 2014, a member of five years sobriety submitted a question to conference in which he stated that *“I was recently head - butted at one of my local meetings by a person who has been coming to AA for a number of years but has been repeatedly violent towards people. At that same meeting a few years ago this person had another violent outburst where they threw a cup at the Secretary and hit someone with a chair. The person who was Secretary at the time has not returned to AA. Having discussed what happened to me with members of the fellowship I have discovered that this person has punched people in meetings, chased someone to their car and started banging on the car windshield while the person was in it and a number of other assaults have occurred over the years. In order for evil to succeed it takes good people to do nothing. If the group of the meeting where I was head - butted had taken action for this person's past transgressions then perhaps I would not have been head - butted there recently. I put it to Conference, does a group have the right to ban a person who is repeatedly violent? I know that this is a very controversial question and I have my concerns about going down the road of banning people from AA. Where would it end? However Tradition 3 states that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. But what if there is someone in your local area who's only desire is to bully and hit people who are trying to practice a spiritual way of life? The group's common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends upon AA unity and my personal recovery was gravely affected by the violent act which happened to me in a meeting which, after five years of sobriety, I thought was a safe place.”* (A.A. General Service Conference (GB) 2014, Questions/Topics not accepted for discussion).

The question was not accepted for Conference discussion instead, the questioner was referred to guidelines and Traditions. These guidelines and Traditions, however, are not worth the paper they are written on unless A.A. members are willing to endorse them, both at local and national levels. How many A.A. members such as the group secretary cited above, have not returned to A.A. due to violent or anti-social behaviour? And how many violent or antisocial people have been coerced to attend A.A. involuntarily in order to satisfy the terms and conditions of their probation order or court, through a policy of collaboration between A.A. committees and the State at national levels?

The problem of how A.A. members can deal with inappropriate/predatory sexual/threatening/violent behaviour

has been raised again for discussion at Conference 2015: *“Would Conference consider the adequacy of guidance offered to groups (pages 82 – 85, The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013) in situations of persistent inappropriate/predatory sexual/threatening/violent behaviour at meetings and online, by individuals, share best practice and make recommendations (including appropriate amendment to the Structure Handbook) to clarify the onus of responsibility on group members to disallow such conduct”* (A.A. Service News, Winter 2014, (161), Committee Five, pp. 11-14).

A report entitled *“Review of the effectiveness of treatment for alcohol problems”* published in 2006 by the National Health Service (NHS) National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse, covering the published international research literature on alcohol interventions and treatment, concluded that *“Coercive referral to AA is ineffective”*, this conclusion based on evidence from meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials (NHS, 2006:142). The report also found that when compared to other treatment options, *“Alcoholics Anonymous obtains a fairly high negative rating, indicating ineffectiveness. However, the studies on which this rating is based used court-referred alcohol misusers who had been mandated to attend for treatment. This is likely to underestimate the effectiveness of AA because: • Such individuals are poor prospects for success from any form of treatment • The involuntary nature of referral to a voluntary organisation like AA limits any conclusions that can be reached.”* (NHS, 2006:140).

A pilot scheme introducing drug courts to the UK, based on the US drug court model began in 2001 with the opening of two drug courts in Scotland. The first drug court opened in 2001 in Glasgow, with a second in Fife in 2002 (Scottish Government, 2009:1; Ministry of Justice, 2011:1; Mc Ivor et al., 2009:31; BBC News Scotland, 2001; BBC News Scotland 2002; BBC News, 2003). These courts built on the experience of Drug Testing and Treatment Orders (DTTOs) which were introduced to the UK through the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (McIvor, 2009:31,32). The first pilot DTTO scheme in Scotland was introduced in Glasgow in 1999, followed by a second in Fife in 2000. DTTOs drew on the US drug court model, but were criticised as being a “watered down” version of the US drug courts (McIvor, 2009:31).

The England and Wales Drug Court pilot was introduced in 2005 with the opening of drug courts in West London and Leeds, followed by courts in Barnsley, Salford, Bristol and Cardiff, these are known as “Dedicated Drug Courts (DDCs)” (Ministry of Justice, 2011:1; BBC News, 2007, 2008; BBC News Wales, 2009). According to the BBC report on the opening of the Cardiff Dedicated Drug Court in 2009, *“The charity Crime Reduction Initiatives, which is involved in the project through its drug workers, said it would bring a “continuity of care and a consistent approach” to sentencing and review of cases. “It is hoped that this will help build a beneficial relationship of trust between offenders and the various agencies involved in the management of their cases,” said a spokeswoman.”* (BBC News, Wales, 2009). In some courts *“representatives from Alcoholics Anonymous”* were felt by staff to be helpful in providing *“additional advice”* and *“support to the court”*, according to a report published by the Ministry of Justice in 2011, *“Probation officers attended reviews in all sites, but this was not the case for treatment providers. Similarly, representatives from Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and, where appropriate, an addiction psychologist were felt by staff to be helpful in providing additional advice and support to the court, though they were not present across all of the sites”* (Ministry of Justice, 2011:12).

In 2006 and 2009, the Scottish Government published results of the operation and effectiveness of the Glasgow and Fife drug courts in a report titled *“The Operation and Effectiveness of the Scottish Drug Court Pilots”*. It was found that of the “clients” participating, *“In Glasgow 47 per cent had completed their Orders compared to a completion rate of 30 per cent in Fife”* (Scottish Government, 2006:8). *“Fifty per cent of Drug Court clients had been reconvicted within one year and 71 per cent within two years. The reconviction rates were similar in Glasgow and Fife and similar for men and women”* (Scottish Government, 2006:9). *“The average cost of a Drug Court Order was estimated to be £18,486 compared with the average costs of a non Drug Court DTTO at £14,085”* (Scottish Government, 2006:9). *“The testing arrangements were also seen as intrusive and even humiliating by some team members. A number of respondents related incidents of clients who had found themselves physically unable to comply and who, despite their motivation to comply with the Order had it revoked because of their inability to urinate in front of another person”* (Scottish Government, 2006:53). *“Whether it is appropriate to develop further Drug Courts in other parts of Scotland will require balancing the costs with the potential benefits of such a development. It is unlikely that Drug Courts would be viable in all or even most parts of the country”* (Scottish Government, 2006:101).

In 2009, the Scottish Government published the *“Review of the Glasgow and Fife Drug Courts REPORT”* which found that *“Across the two Drug Courts, 70% of offenders had been reconvicted within one year and 82% within two years. Reconviction rates were almost identical in Fife and Glasgow.”* (Scottish Government 2009:8). *“Taking an average of the unit cost of completed Drug Court Orders over the two years, 2007/8 – 2008/09, the costs are as follows: Glasgow Drug Court £46,442, Fife Drug Court £48,737. In comparison, the average cost for a*

successfully-completed non Drug Court DTTO in 2007-08 (the latest year for which data is available) was £35,897" (Scottish Government, 2009:10).

Among the report's conclusions it was revealed that "At this stage, evidence on the outcomes of Drug Court Orders is inconclusive. Analysis suggests that the reconviction rates and frequency of reconviction among Drug Court cases was very similar to those among offenders given DTTOs under Summary proceedings, although these figures should be treated with caution as the sample sizes are small" (Scottish Government, 2009:11).

The Fife drug court is reported to have closed in November 2013, (Herald, Scotland, 2013; Law Society of Scotland Journal, 2013) amidst opposition from Drug Court advocates (Currier, 2013).

In England, the proceeding of the West London Dedicated Drug Court pilot was reported by the BBC, 'The Guardian' and 'The Daily Mail' newspapers.

According to the BBC, "Prime Minister David Cameron thinks the prison service is "not working properly" and major reforms are planned. So, how is punishment likely to look in the coming years?

The man is sitting face to face with the judge. He is so close their knees could almost touch. After 20 minutes, as things are about to wrap up, the judge says to him: "You know if you've got a problem you can ring me... ring me and I'll swear at you down the phone." Then J, who the BBC has agreed not to name at the judge's request, stands up to leave the courtroom. The judge gives him a hug. J says "cheers, mate," then walks out. The first review of his Drug Rehabilitation Requirement is over..." (BBC, 2010).

According to 'The Guardian,' "...He prefers rugby shirt and trainers to wig and gown, gives his mobile number to 'clients' and claims a high success rate for one of the first drug courts in the country Chris Arnot meets Justin Philips, a most unusual judge...

...True, his blue shirt has the stiff white collar and cuffs common to those who ply their trade in the courts. But the collar is undone and the tail of the shirt hangs loose around tracksuit bottoms, worn with well-used trainers. He prefers the casual look when presiding over the country's first dedicated drugs court. From a wardrobe in the corner of the room, he plucks then flourishes a yellow rugby shirt with the words Hugs Not Drugs printed on the back. "A 60th birthday present from my relatives in South Africa," he confides. "I go there at least four times a year."

It explains the presence in the wardrobe of complimentary sweatshirts bearing the crest of South African Airways. "I give these out to clients who successfully complete the drug addiction course that we send them on as an alternative to prison," he says. "There are so many of them now that I'm running out of shirts. Sometimes, I give them hotel slippers instead." Are they grateful? "I think they're amused," he reflects. "They also get a completion certificate, and a hug from me."

The "friends" he faces in court are addressed by their first names and told they can call him Judge Justin if they test negative. He will also give them his mobile phone number, and leave his phone switched on during evenings and weekends. So what happens if he's just sitting down to dinner when a client calls? "Well, I'd rather they rang me than their supplier," he says. "It's more important that they stay off drugs than my meal goes cold. You have to remember that these people are usually from the margins of society. They've had no respect from anybody. Suddenly, a 5ft 6ins tall judge in a rugby shirt has embraced them. It knocks them out of their comfort zone. I can remember one boy who cried for 15 minutes with his head on my lap."

But isn't there a danger that this approach could be seen as too familiar and be interpreted as a soft touch? "Nobody crosses my path twice," he insists. "If clients don't comply with my drugs treatment orders, I'll have 'em locked up."... (Guardian, 2009).

According to 'The Daily Mail' "...Criminals who are monitored, tested and found to be drug-free after six weeks can expect a bear hug from the judge himself, and even a kiss after repeated negative testing. As a gift, he also hands out airline sleep-shirts or slippers, liberated from flights and hotel rooms in his native South Africa...

...But critics raised grave concerns over whether such methods are appropriate in a criminal court, and cast doubts over the long-term benefits of treating drug offenders so gently. Criminologist Dr David Green, director of the Civitas think tank, said: "There is a case for somebody in the criminal justice system trying to befriend offenders, but not the judge. Police do the arresting, probation staff work closely with offenders and the judge's role is to maintain impartiality and remain above the fray, judging each case on the facts, without fear or favour. The whole system depends on judges keeping that healthy distance from the accused, and I think Mr Philips is mixing up the roles and confusing the approaches."

Dr Green said there was little convincing evidence of similar approaches in U.S. drug courts having a beneficial impact on addiction and crime rates, and called for a rigorous appraisal to compare results from the West London court with the rest of the UK.

Mary Brett, UK representative of the Europe Against Drugs think tank, said: “I’m very suspicious of people trying to be matey with offenders...” (Daily Mail, 2009).

According to ‘The Solicitors Journal’ “...District Judge Justin Philips is an unlikely legal hero. His private email address begins with ‘stompie’ – the gleeful Afrikaans for ‘short arse’ – his language in and out of court is on the ripe side and his dress sense is appalling... ...The courts work on the carrot and stick principle. The stick, one suspects, is applied reasonably lightly and as a last resort, but it is applied, and the threat of imprisonment is real... ...Justin – always Justin in court – applauds like mad, knows his people intimately, remembers everything about them even when the file is missing, listens with intense care, and ends each session with a ritual hug borrowed from the US drugs court model. Although somewhat cringe-making to watch at first, the hugs do make sense: they are a signifier of shared humanity...” (Solicitors Journal, 2007).

In 2014, ‘The Guardian’ reported that “...According to supporters, however, specialist courts are now in danger of being disbanded through lack of official support. The West London drugs court, in Hammersmith, sits only half a day a week and is no longer staffed exclusively by specially trained magistrates... ...The Ministry of Justice denies it is undermining drug courts. The justice minister, Damian Green, says: “Local experts know what works in their community and how best to tackle local issues, so we want to empower communities to support local initiatives such as the dedicated drugs courts, of which there are seven across the country. This is in addition to in excess of 30 courts where drug courts can also sit depending on local need. It will be for local communities to decide whether this approach is suitable for offenders in their area” (Guardian, 2014).

In October 2014, the Home Office published a report entitled “*Drugs: International Comparators*” comparing the international evidence based approaches to drugs misuse and drug addiction from 13 countries. According to the report, “The fact-finding phase of the study looked at: Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and Uruguay. The study also undertook desk-based research on Brazil and the Netherlands” (Home Office, 2014:12). The report found that “drug court models in the UK (including Scotland) have shown no impact on reoffending rates” (Home Office, 2014:5). In the USA and Canada the report found that “A 2010 analysis of the results of four systematic reviews and two meta-analyses in drug court evaluation literature concluded that overall, studies lean towards endorsing the beneficial effects of drug courts, but noted that they were neither universally nor unconditionally positive. A review in 2006 concluded that evaluations of drug courts have led to mixed results, but that consideration of findings across fifty studies tentatively suggests that drug court participants are less likely to reoffend than offenders sentenced to traditional correctional options. Both reviews highlight that the mixed results seen across evaluations may, in part, be due to the generally weak methodology used and the lack of consistency across evaluations.

Two major evaluations of drug courts in Canada were reviewed in 2007. Similar to the reviews in the USA, the authors found methodological problems with both evaluations and found that they did not demonstrate the effectiveness of drugs courts in reducing drug use and reoffending.” (Home Office, 2014:26,27). “The disparity in drug use trends and criminal justice statistics between countries with similar approaches, and the lack of any clear correlation between the ‘toughness’ of an approach and levels of drug use demonstrates the complexity of the issue” (Home Office, 2014:52). The 55 page report may be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-international-comparators>

### 3.6 Drug Court/Recovery Community Advocacy in the UK

In December 2013, according to the BBC, “Think-tank Policy Exchange is calling for more drugs courts - on which former addicts might sit as magistrates - in the UK and has met Justice Secretary Chris Grayling to discuss the idea. They were joined by a delegation from the United States including former addict and actor, Matthew Perry. He spoke to Newsnight along with journalist Peter Hitchens and Baroness Meacher, who chairs the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform” (BBC, 2013). The Newsnight debate, “Matthew Perry debates drug courts with Peter Hitchens” may be viewed on the BBC’s youtube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDtIZZiySgA>

The Center for Social Justice (CSJ) which advocates drug courts was founded as an independent think-tank by Conservative Party Leader Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004, (CSJ, 2014a). According to the CSJ, “A potentially successful means of tackling addiction is the use of drug courts... ... The CSJ calls on the Ministry of Justice to re-trial drug courts with adherence to all the key factors identified as essential to their success and then evaluate them in full” (CSJ, 2014:25,26). In 2010 the CSJ published a Green Paper titled “*Criminal Justice and Addiction*” advocating that “recovery communities should be expanded as widely as possible” (CSJ, 2010:27). and “We believe Courts should be able to sentence offenders to residential drug rehabilitation...” (CSJ, 2010:33). The CSJ also

advocates the appointment of a *“Recovery Champion for England to review and hold to account the performance of local authorities... ..To help drive forward the new recovery movement in all parts of the country... ..the Recovery Champion would report to the Secretary of State for Health on how successfully local authorities are commissioning effective recovery services... ..Have the power to interview clients and staff in private... ..Have access to government papers and officials across government... ..Reports, either on the performance of individual authorities, or discrete recovery-related topics, would be compiled and submitted to the Secretary of State for Health and copied to the Social Justice Directorate”* (CSJ, 2014:57,58).

An example of a Recovery Community/ Drug Court Advocacy operating at a grass-roots level in the U.K., is that of the U.S. based Recovery Movement organisation *Faces and Voices of Recovery* and *The Welsh Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs* (WCAOD). According to WCAOD’s website, *“The Welsh Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs was created as a Registered Charity in 1968 as a successor to the temperance movements”* (WCAOD, 2014a). According to WCAOD’s Chief Executive Officer, Wynford Ellis Owen, WCAOD currently utilises *“12-Step facilitation (TSF)... ..which is an independent treatment based on the 12 step philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA, 1976)”* (WCAOD, 2014b:2). According to Owen’s *“Analysis of the 12 Step Recovery process from a Cognitive Behavioural Point of View,”* *“In CBT, the process would be described as ‘Graded Task Assignments’ – whereby the alcoholic would be encouraged to engage in ‘approximations’ of whatever behaviour is desired in order to ‘build’ towards the desired goal, e.g. instead of mixing with old friends who are heavy drinkers, the newcomer would be encouraged to meet a sober member of AA (his sponsor possibly) for a ‘chat over coffee’. The practice of attending ‘ninety meetings in ninety days’ or practicing the acronym HALT - don’t get Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired, which are ‘triggers’ to relapse – is, likewise, effective behavioural reprogramming”* (WCAOD, 2014b:9). According to Owen’s *‘Central ideas in the philosophy of 12-step programmes,’* *“AA is also a ‘way of life’ which AA’s live ‘one day at a time without taking a drink’ as they ‘trudge the Road of Happy Destiny’. And they do that trudging in anonymity, because ‘anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities”* (WCAOD, 2014c:7-8).

After a two month trip to the USA visiting a *“network”* of *“new recovery community centres”* in Vermont, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Washington D.C. and Virginia, Owen returned to Wales a *“man on a mission”* with *“an idea for the world”* (WCAOD, 2014e). The outcome of the trip provided Owen *“with ideas on how to better build a strong “peer culture” into the services I am establishing as part of The Living Room Cardiff project which hopes to open its doors in 2011”*(WCAOD, 2014d). According to Owen, *“I owe a debt of gratitude, incidentally, to William (Bill) L White MA, a world renowned academic and expert in the field of substance misuse, who has mentored me and been a great source of wisdom and support as I’ve planned my itinerary”*(WCAOD, 2014d). William White, a consultant for Faces and Voices of Recovery (White, 2013:11), was unable to attend WCAOD’s annual lecture in 2011, sending one of the leading U.S. recovery advocates instead (White, 2011a).

Faces and Voices of Recovery was founded *“...in 2001 as the organizational center of the recovery advocacy movement”*(White, 2009). The Faces and Voices of Recovery mission includes *“mobilizing the over 23 million Americans in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs”* to *‘Build the capacity of recovery community organizations to thrive and participate in local, state and national policy arenas, deliver peer recovery support services; and mobilize the local recovery community”* including *“Laws and policies”* (Faces and Voices for Recovery, 2014). In 2014, Faces and Voices for Recovery were campaigning at a grass roots level in the USA to solicit individuals to lobby their Senator or Representative to support the Congress bill *‘Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2014’* (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2014a, 2014b). If enacted, the Act would designate federal funds between \$40 million and \$80 million toward advancing treatment and recovery support services (Faces and Voices of Recovery, 2014a). The Faces and Voices of Recovery campaign, however, did not mention that the bill also included federal grants to *“(C) prosecutor and defender based programs (D) specialized probation; (F) drug courts, DWI courts, and veterans treatment courts”* (Congress, 2014:14 [S. 2839 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2014]).

At a national level in the UK, in May 2014, a *“Recovery Advocate in professional service”*, Mark Gilman (White, 2011) attended the House of Commons at the *“A.A. annual parliamentary public information event”*, reported in A.A. Service News: *“We had two superb professional speakers, Mark Gilman, former head of the National Treatment Agency, a criminologist and longstanding supporter for 20 years who gave an erudite yet passionate and often funny endorsement of AA, with anecdotes of the legions of recovering AAs whom he had worked with illuminating the psycho jargon. His fire was balanced by the forensic presentation of Dr Jane Marshall, a Consultant Psychiatrist...”* (A.A. Service News, Autumn, 2014:4). At the *“AA Awareness event”* at the Scottish Parliament, in October 2014, *“Mark Gilman from NHS England gave a spirited and sometimes humorous presentation on the 12 Step programme of AA and how best the professional community could co-operate with Alcoholics Anonymous”* (A.A. Service News,



Winter, 2014:15). Gilman, has long been inspired by the work of George De Leon (White, 2011), a former Synanon cult participant, pioneer of the Synanon based TC movement and creator of the Recovery Oriented Integrations System (ROIS)(White, 2010; Shapiro, Oubridge, 2012:9).

According to Owen, in his analysis of *“The Central Ideas in the Philosophy of the 12 Step Programme,”* *“One issue, however, has perplexed me somewhat, and, to date, I’ve failed to adequately answer my own question. Why does AA, as I’ve witnessed too often, seem to attract such vitriolic and misinformed criticism?”* (WCAOD, 2014c:11).

### **3.7 The future progression of Drug Courts and how this political trend in the Criminal Justice system may affect alcoholics**

The future of drug-courts is to expand the ‘problem solving’ court model to address and solve entrenched social problems (Tiger, 2001:179), these courts catering for other areas of ‘disease,’ mental health, gambling, and juveniles. (Tiger, 2013a:115-132). There are approximately 175 mental health courts in operation in USA (Tiger, 2013a:123) which *“...are based on the idea that sanctions and incentives are the best way to treat the biologically rooted disorder of mental illness”* (Tiger, 2013a:124).

According to Tiger, *“Referred to as “good courts” (Berman and Feinblatt, 2005), problem-solving courts are an explicit attempt to use courts to address — and solve — entrenched social problems. In this call to inject a healing function in the criminal justice system, drug courts greatly resemble the “court-based regime[s] of social governance” (Willrich, 2003:243) of the Progressive Era in the United States”* (Tiger, 2011:179).

*“Drug courts — and the off-shoot interventions represented in the proliferation of ”problem-solving courts” — are an important example of conceptual medicalization where medical terminology is used but medical professionals have little or no involvement.”* (Tiger, 2011:179)

The combining of the judicial system with medical treatment in what Tiger describes as *“a type of biopsychological determinism”* (Tiger, 2011:172) and what Gowan and Whetstone describe as *“biochemical ‘diagnosis’ of pathology”* appears to parallel the *“...use of the idiom of disease and cure”*(Lifton, 1989:ix) and *“biomedical vision”*(Lifton, 2000:4,22-44) observed by Robert J. Lifton in his studies of Chinese communist thought reform and totalitarian ideology.

*“In recent research on Nazi Germany I was able to explore the most sinister of all historical examples of this phenomenon. I found that a particular kind of totalistic ideology — a biologized view of society, or what I called a “biomedical vision” — could, with its accompanying institutions, draw very ordinary people into murderous activities. I came to understand that in an atmosphere of totalism and brutality, even fragments of an ideology can readily contribute to participation in killing, as I reported in my book *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. There are parallels in Nazi and Chinese Communist use of the idiom of disease and cure, as totalistic systems are apt to do; equally significant is the general contrast between Nazi cure by mass murder and Chinese cure by “re-education”* (Lifton, 1989:ix).

*“...For it was the combination of external force or coercion with an appeal to inner enthusiasm through evangelistic exhortation which gave thought reform its emotional scope and power. Coercion and break-down are of course more prominent in the prison and military programs, while use of the idiom of disease and cure are especially stressed with the rest of the Chinese population; and it becomes extremely difficult to determine just where exhortation ends and coercion begins”* (Lifton, 1989:13).

The arrival in the UK of an American advocacy for the sterilisation of drug addicts, in the form of *“Project Prevention”* a charity started in 1997 (BBC News, 2010a), which bribes addicts into being sterilised by offering them the sum of £200 in cash (BBC News, 2010b), coupled with the possible progression of drug court ideology and expansion of ‘problem solving’ courts, may be of concern to alcoholics, since they have already been reframed as addicts within the prevailing medical theories and social construction of addiction as a ‘disease’ (Tiger, 2013b:3). The first addict to accept the £200 in cash in the UK was ‘John’ from Leicester (BBC News, 2010b). History records that once an idea becomes politically and socially acceptable, it can then also progress to becoming compulsory by law. Therefore, the younger generation of alcoholics in A.A. may consider that in the not so distant future, a ‘slip’ might also mean a ‘snip.’

When reading the following, bear in mind that given the right conditions of social and political upheaval, combined with fear or complacency in a society and a popular demand for charismatic leadership, sweeping and radical changes can occur quite quickly without a vigilant opposition. In 1907, after the death of his mother, an unemployed man ran out of money and was forced to live in homeless shelters and men’s hostels. Just twenty six

years later in 1933, by capturing hearts and minds, he was appointed Chancellor of Germany. Only a year later in 1934, he had implemented a policy of mass sterilisation of alcoholics under the age of fifty along with other people judged to be genetically inferior.

According to Lifton, *“Only in Nazi Germany was sterilisation a forerunner of mass murder. Programs of coercive sterilization were not peculiar to Nazi Germany. They have existed in much of the Western world, including the United States, which has a history of coercive and sometimes illegal sterilization applied mostly to the underclass of our society. It was in the United States that a relatively simple form of vasectomy was developed at a penal institution around the turn of the century. This procedure, together with a rising interest in eugenics, led, by 1920, to the enactment of laws in twenty five states providing for the compulsory sterilization of the criminally insane and other people considered genetically inferior. No wonder that Fritz Lenz, a German physician-geneticist advocate of sterilization (later a leading ideologue in the Nazi program of “racial hygiene”), could, in 1923, berate his countrymen for their backwardness in the domain of sterilization as compared with the United States”* (Lifton, 2000:22,23).

The Nazi regime *“...employed a rhetoric of medical emergency: “dangerous patients” and “urgent cases” were people with hereditary taints still in the prime of their life. Among “urgent cases” were mentally deficient but physically healthy men and women between the ages of sixteen and forty, schizophrenic and manic-depressive patients in remission, epileptics, and alcoholics under the age of fifty etc. Once a petition was heard before a sterilization court, the die was pretty well cast. More than 90 percent of petitions taken before the special courts in 1934 resulted in sterilization... ..No one knows how many people were actually sterilized; reliable estimates are between 200,000 and 350,000”* (Lifton, 2000:27). *“Sterilization policies were always associated with the therapeutic and regenerative principles of the biomedical vision: with the purification of the ‘national body’ and the eradication of morbid hereditary dispositions.”*(Lifton, 2000:42)

According to Travis, in the USA, *“The largest organization advocating national prohibition, the Anti-Saloon League, rallied its troops in its 1911 Yearbook by reminding them that they were involved in a “war - continued, relentless war.” Even previously even-handed inebriety physicians joined in, moved by the belief that alcohol was a “racial poison,” capable of diluting the genetic stock of the ruling classes and thus undermining Western civilization. They ceased to advocate for compassionate rehabilitation of chronic inebriates, and began to argue instead for their quarantine in public workhouses and mandatory sterilization. The eugenicist belief that certain populations were predisposed to alcohol abuse and related vices made sterilization more than justified as a public health measure: “it might be curative; it surely would be preventative, and better by far...than having [them] beget a brood tainted with this curse of the world”* (Travis, 2009:25,26).

According to Stone and Kuznick, *“In 1911, as governor of New Jersey, eugenics enthusiast Woodrow Wilson had signed a law authorizing sterilization of convicts, epileptics, and the feeble-minded. Over the following decades, some sixty thousand Americans would be sterilized, more than a third of them in California. Sexually active women were particularly targeted”* (Stone & Kuznic, 2014:30).

In 1977, only nineteen years after an unemployed Dederich formed his group of alcoholics and addicts in Santa Monica, Dederich implemented a policy of mass sterilisation in Synanon. Synanon cult doctors sterilised all the Synanon men by giving them vasectomies, except Dederich, and women in the cult were forced to have abortions (Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:218-220). *“Within a week nearly 200 men had undergone vasectomies, performed in Synanon, by Synanon’s own cadre of doctors, working 10 hours a day, seven days a week ... A number of men entered the operating rooms supported by their friends, shaking and weeping. At one point in Tomales Bay, four doctors waited with scalpels at the ready while their patients were called out of a game, one by one... For the women, the situation was much worse. Unlike the men, who merely had to give up the possibility of having children, the women were being asked to abort babies already in their wombs. When the childlessness policy came down, four of them were pregnant, one of them more four months... Yet all of them wound up having abortions”*(Mitchell, Mitchell, Ofshe, 1980:218).

## Chapter 4

# Emergence of a Fundamentalist Movement in A.A.

During the 1980s and 1990s a fundamentalist movement arose in A.A. (Kurtz, White, 2015:63). The movement is known under a variety of names “*Primary Purpose*” “*Back to Basics*” “*Big Book Fundamentalists*” (Kurtz, White, 2015:63) “*Big Book Study Movement*” (A.A. General Service Conference, Ireland). This movement is also referred to as a “*traditionalist subculture*” “*traditionalists*” and “*traditionalist AA*” (Travis, 2009:80,83,143,173). “*Mid-West AA*” and “*midwestern*” AA” ( Mitchell K., 1997:213; Travis, 2009:180). The use of the term “*traditionalist*” to describe the movement however, may be confusing, because the movement actively disregards A.A. Traditions. It may be more appropriately described as a “*fundamentalist*” movement (A.A. European Service Meeting, 2011:11).

According to Kurtz and White, “*The “Big Book Fundamentalists” draw their inspiration and practice from their understanding of how Alcoholics Anonymous functioned at its birthplace in Akron, Ohio, during the mid-1930s, when the alcoholics met as “the alcoholic squadron” of the Oxford Group, and in the early-1940s Cleveland “Beginners’ Meetings” offspring of that approach. Although this style infuses many groups to varying extents, it finds its most explicit expression in the “Primary Purpose” and “Back to Basics” movements founded within A.A. in 1988 and 1995, respectively. Followers of these movements continue to give lip-service to the “spiritual rather than religious” shibboleth, but members and groups formed in this Akronite tradition insist on a brand of “spirituality” that harbors no room for disagreement about a very explicitly Christian content. Such explicitness spans efforts to Christianize early A.A. history, elevate Christian literature on par with A.A.’s own literature, and assert Christian conversion as a central mechanism of A.A.’s effectiveness*”(Kurtz, White, 2015:63).

According to Travis, “*The audience for this kind of traditionalist publication - both its size and demographic make-up - is difficult to ascertain. It is most likely, however, that it has grown since the late 1990s, when the Internet began to provide traditionalist authors and their partisans an efficient means of communication and a highly visible platform. Web sites like Silkworth.net (<www.silkworth.net>), AA Big Book Study Group (<www.aabbsg.org>), The Primary Purpose Group (<www.ppgaadallas.org>), and GSO Watch (<http://aagso.org>), to name a few, promote traditionalist authors alongside the little Red Book and Twenty-four Hours a Day. While such sites differ in the degree of vitriol that they hurl at the dominant AA culture, all of them tout amateur publications as counterweights to a cultural movement in which ‘the Language of the Heart’ has gotten all tangled up with drugs, pop psychology, clinical terminology, and emotionalism*” (Travis, 2009,179-180).

By 1968, the first generation TC, Daytop and Synanon had sparked a widespread “back to basics” movement in A.A. (AA Grapevine, 1968). The importance of Oxford Group and Moral Re-armament philosophy to the TC movement as well as its methods of coercion, may have struck a chord with an existing faction in A.A. which had emerged in the 1940s in Cleveland, Ohio, under the leadership of Clarence S. According to fundamentalist amateur historian Mitchell K., Clarence S. had been associated with a previous short lived “back to basics” movement in the 1950s, known as “*The Orthodox Movement*” (Mitchell K., 1997:209).

Although the fundamentalists appear to be reacting against the diversity of hybrid 12-step programmes created by the treatment industry, (Travis, 2009:173; Mitchell K., 1997:225,226), all the movement’s primary inspirational leaders were, or are, founders or directors of treatment centres or what may be described as TCs or recovery communities. The programmes they market reflect a branch of the 12-Step treatment industry’s diversity: hybrid 12-step/Synanon/Oxford Group programmes, which they market, in various formats, as the “original” A.A. programme.

#### 4.1 Synanon, Tom P. Jr., “Gresham’s Law and Alcoholics Anonymous”, East Ridge Community and Recovery Center, All Addicts Anonymous, The Family Foundation School/Allynwood Academy, Congress Child Abuse Hearings, House of Parliament Presentation

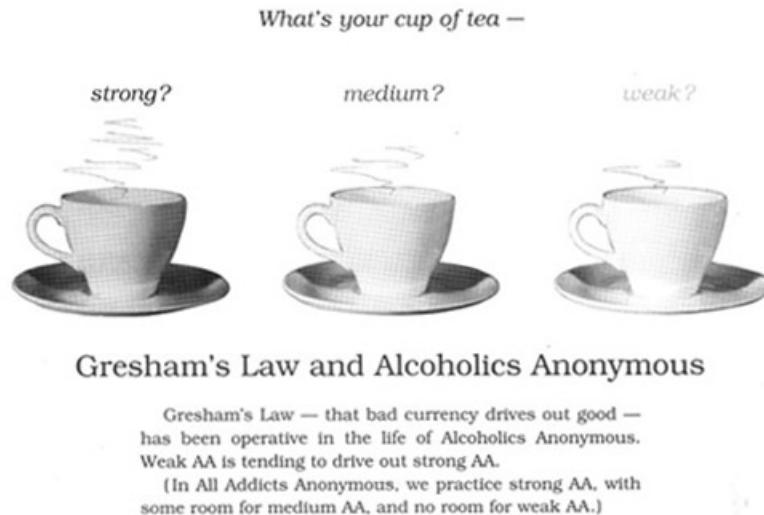


Figure 4.1: Illustration of “Gresham’s Law and Alcoholics Anonymous” courtesy of the All Addicts Anonymous (AAA) website, reprinted without permission.

The article “*Gresham’s Law and Alcoholics Anonymous*” puts forward a view that Alcoholics Anonymous has undergone a progressive weakening by dilution since the inception of the fellowship, reducing recovery rates. The “law” argues for what is termed a ‘*strong*’ and ‘*original*’ approach to the A.A. programme and appears to serve as a major support to the fundamentalist movement. According to Travis, “*Describing the fellowship’s fallen state in the mid-1970s, Tom P. Jr. wrote that there were currently “three ways to work the program of alcoholics Anonymous...”* (Travis, 2009:176) “*...Tom P. Jr. challenged his fellow alcoholics to embrace once again what he called the “strong original...[the] undiluted dosage of the spiritual principles” with which AA had begun...*” (Travis, 2009:176).

In 1968 the widespread and combined influence of the Synanon cult and the first generation Synanon TC, Daytop, on Alcoholics Anonymous, was recorded in *AA Grapevine* in a number of articles describing new kinds of A.A. meeting opening up from East and West coasts of USA, under the editorial titled “*Winds of Change*” (AA Grapevine 1968a,b). The articles reflected a general critical theme that “*AA has waxed genteel*” (AA Grapevine, 1968b) and offered a contradictory approach as a solution, being simultaneously progressive and retrogressive, in that they adopted the “*exciting ferment today in the fields of psychology and psychiatry*” and methods of “*those workers in related disciplines who are exploring and extending the techniques of spiritual recovery and regeneration*” (AA Grapevine 1968a); whilst at the same time, advocating that they were returning to “*the very things that made AA work in the beginning*” (AA Grapevine 1968c), “*much closer to the tone and intention of the fifth chapter of AA’s Big Book than are most AA meetings today*” (AA Grapevine 1968b). The hybrid Synanon-AA meetings were open to non-alcoholics (A.A. Grapevine 1968b, c), “*including anyone who will abide by the rules of the meeting.*” (AA Grapevine 1968b) and incorporated Synanon’s “*tough love*” encounter group approach of “*Nothing held back, a real eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation*” (AA Grapevine 1968c).

According to one organiser of the new hybrid Synanon-AA meetings, “*I’d like to say a couple of things by way of clarifying what they are and what they aren’t. First, they are not, I repeat not, group therapy. They are God and*

group (in that order) therapy - and, believe me, that's a far different kind of animal. Second, there is really nothing new about them. They hark back directly to the practice of the first AA members. In that sense, they represent a renewal of the early spirit of the movement" (AA Grapevine, 1968d). This article was signed by a "T.P. Jr, Hankins, New York". Eight years later, in 1976, Tom P. Jr, Hankins, New York, published "Gresham's Law and Alcoholics Anonymous", an article which underpins the present fundamentalist movement.

Hankins, New York is small hamlet situated on the bank of the Delaware River approximately 125 miles drive Northwest of New York City, in Sullivan County which is in the Catskill Mountains in New York State. Estimated population for the Hankins Zip code area in 2010 was 351 (<http://www.zip-codes.com/city/NY-HANKINS.asp>). In 1993, Tom P. Jr, Hankins, New York, copyrighted "Gresham's Law and Alcoholics Anonymous," (Silkworth.net, 2014). The article was first published in 1976 in 24 Magazine (Travis, 2009:176,306; Silkworth.net, 2014; aacultwatch, 2010). 24 Magazine, later renamed 24 Newsletter, (Travis, 2009:306) is the newsletter of East Ridge Community and Recovery Center and All Addicts Anonymous, and is published by 24 Communications Inc., Hankins, New York (24 Newsletter, 2013:2). East Ridge Community and All Addicts Anonymous were co-founded by Tom P. Sr and Tom P. Jr in 1964 (24 Newsletter, 2013:3). According to Brown University, in 1961, Tom P. Sr had moved to Hankins, New York, after disassociating with his Sponsor Bill W., over allegations about Bill W.'s marital infidelity (Brown University, 2010).

According to Brown University, "Tom Powers (1911-2005) attended his first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in White Plains, New York, in October, 1941. After several unsuccessful hospitalizations Powers remained a hardened alcoholic and drug addict, and his initial success in AA was seriously compromised by his atheism. Despite attending AA meetings he soon began to drink again, and again he ended up in the hospital. There he began the serious reconsideration of AA's Twelve Step Program and his own belief in God that grew into his book *Invitation to a Great Experiment* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1979). With Bill Wilson as his sponsor Powers became sober in October 1946, eventually assisting in the editing of the *Big Book*, second edition. Powers always considered Bill Wilson to be his sponsor but he later disassociated from Wilson over allegations about Wilson's marital infidelity. Tom Powers is credited with applying the Twelve Step Program to the treatment of other addictions such as drugs, eating and sex. After his break with Bill Wilson he moved to Hankins, New York, in 1961 where he established the East Ridge clinic whose principles of recovery would eventually become All Addicts Anonymous (AAA)" (Brown University, 2010).

Sometimes referred to as "Bill Wilson's editorial consultant" (24 Newsletter, 2013:13) Tom P. was not the only one to assist Bill W. According to A.A. World Services Inc., there were numerous other friends and editors, including journalist Jack Alexander (A.A. World Services Inc., 1984:354): "These three books, all written in the 1950's, occupied him [Bill W.] in immediate succession. The "Twelve and Twelve" was published in 1953; the second edition of the *Big Book*, in 1955; "A.A. Comes of Age," in 1957. He wrote a section at a time and sent it to friends and editors for their comments. Then he revised the original material according to suggestions that came in. He also used trusted A.A.'s to help him with the three projects: Betty L... ..Tom P... ..and Ed B..." (A.A. World Services Inc., 1984:354).

According to a chaplain at Austin Recovery, Austin, Texas, Tom P. was once an up and coming copy writer for a New York advertising firm (Austin Recovery, 2012). The extent of Tom P's involvement with the editing and writing of the above A.A. publications, however, may have been overstated in various 'recovery' publications, since they appear to rely mainly on Tom P's version of events. So too, his reported "life-long friendship" with Bill W. which apparently ended after 15 years. The reasons for Tom P's departing company with Bill W. may also have been overstated and later embroidered. According to an interviewer of Tom P at his "East Ridge retreat" Tom P. "said that he could no longer tolerate Bill Wilson's philandering; he also had reason to think Bill was a thief" (Cheever, 2012).

In 2014, a boarding school founded and owned by friends of Tom P. and East Ridge Community (24 Newsletter, 2013:9; Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014a) closed following State investigations into allegations of child abuse made by over 100 former students (WBNG-TV News, 2014; Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014; Congress, 2008:17). The school was reportedly staffed by some members of East Ridge Community (healonline.org, 2013). The Family Foundation School, later re-named Allynwood Academy, operated a curriculum which claimed to be based on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, (Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014). One of the school's co-founders also "openly admitted that the culture of *The Family Foundation School's program is loosely based off Synanon*" (Zoom Information, 2014).

According to the Allynwood Academy website, which remains open after the school's closure, "The founders of Allynwood Academy were heavily influenced by Alcoholics Anonymous. Today the 12 Steps of recovery are taught in our living skills classes and serve as a touch-stone for decision-making at all levels of the organization...Each student

chooses a 12-Step sponsor upon enrollment. Students also choose a junior sponsor — another student with 12-Step experience who will provide support and insight. Students are encouraged to work with their sponsors and junior sponsors regularly. Additionally, students often have the opportunity to attend off-campus AA meetings. Students also engage in group discussions, called “table topics,” at meals whenever an issue or concern needs to be addressed” (Allynwood Academy, 2015a).

The following is a witness statement by a former student of the Family Foundation School, made at the 2008, 110th Congress hearing: “*Child Abuse and Deceptive Marketing by Residential Programs for Teens*” (Congress, 2008:18). In addition to the abuse that students endured at the school, some as young as twelve years old, they were “forced to attend daily religious services and A.A. meetings” (Congress, 2008:18).

**“STATEMENT OF JON MARTIN–CRAWFORD, FORMER PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, THE FAMILY FOUNDATION SCHOOL**

Mr. MARTIN-CRAWFORD. First, I would like to thank the chairman and the committee for the opportunity to present my side of this story. After watching the hearing back in October, I was truly inspired by the clear case of morality that brought together both sides of the aisle on this discussion. We have been called noisy complainers, and we have been called manipulating troublemakers, but after over 10 years, I finally have my chance to speak.

My name is Jon Martin-Crawford, and I was locked up at a NATSAP-affiliated program, The Family Foundation School, in Hancock, New York, from 1995 to 1997.

My life at home was anything but stable, causing me to seek my own release from it all. I created a persona for myself, the troublemaker at school, always looking for attention I didn’t get at home. I was involved in drugs by the age of 13. I was lost, constantly in fights, legal run-ins and more. My parents were at wits’ end. My only release was my music, my writing and my skateboarding. After being expelled from public school and one private school for marijuana use and writing an underground newspaper, my parents were told to send me to The Family shortly thereafter, thinking it would give me what I needed.

Once I arrived at The Family, I knew I was there until I was 18. I went through what seems like the ritualistic stripping of identity almost all of us survivors faced. I was stripped; my clothes were taken and thrown away. My music, my art, my skateboard all destroyed. What I didn’t have with me my parents were told to destroy as well. I was left with only a letter from my mother for the next 3 months.

I had been to some in-patient settings before, but this one was different. Other places allowed phone calls, mail and peer communication. Here, I wasn’t even allowed to call home the first few months. Even after that, I only got that one phone call home a week, nothing more - no access to CPS.

Here I was only allowed to talk to staff and kids that had been there more than 6 months. I was told I was denying the extent of my drug use, and I was confused as to just how I would “get better” enough to see my family. I sat and watched and learned to play the game of lies necessary to get privileges and eventually get out. I was lucky and figured these rules out quickly enough not to endure what I saw many kids endure.

But I witnessed it all, including staff punching students in the face while restraining, not once but several times. Typical restraint procedures were wrapping kids up in duct tape and blankets. Kids were not let out of this wrap, even to use the bathroom, for feminine hygiene, or just to move around a little bit and extend their limbs.

Restraints were not only done by faculty, but students as well. Usually, this was even more brutal and was often done in front of all other students to show what will happen if you act out. Kids were forced to eat food they were allergic to and keep eating even if vomiting as a result.

We were forced to attend daily religious services and A.A. meetings and share personal stories with the outside world. Kids as young as 12 being taken out of school to carry out pointless manual labor, such as shovel manure, carry wheelbarrows of rocks, sweeping the roof, shoveling numerous things, for days on end. When kids tried to run away, it was again not only staff but students told to chase, tackle, restrain and bring them back.

Many things were heard from staff, berating kids with high levels of verbal abuse, often of a highly derogatory and sexual nature, at times regarding sexual orientation. An admitted sex addict was one of the high-up faculty and counselors, as well as a dorm monitor living above the boys’ dorm.

The rules I learned to avoid many of these problems were as follows:

I made up a horrible past to cure myself of. Our moral inventory was nearly always fabricated to make our problems seem worse and the program seem like salvation. Tell on yourself and your peers for things you may have never done to give the illusion you are getting better and working the program. If you have certain gifts, you can find

a way to skate by. For me, I was their golden boy with my pen. And at my graduation speech, as well as for others, our speeches were used as propaganda as part of the family day for all the parents to hear their message of goodwill.

Under no circumstances were we to tell our parents or prospective parents the truth about what we saw. I was fortunate enough to go home after a while, but I quickly learned that if I told my parents the truth about what I saw, I would only be explained as a manipulation and lose more privileges.

While I had been fortunate enough to miss out on these horrors personally, I gave many tours to prospective parents, always omitting the details of restraints, punishments, and any lack of communication against the abuses that took place. As a dorm leader, I was told to wake up one of the kids in my dorm with the lamp that only had a floodlight as a bulb, burning his retinas. I participated in the restraining and took part in the barrage of verbal attacks, just as did many of my peers. I am not proud of this, but we had no choice. If we did not conform, we were being negative and subjected to the same treatment and lack of privileges as everyone else.

Once I left, I saw that I was now in the real world with real problems again, and the school had never helped me with those problems. After nightmares of *The Family* led to a relapse, I was soon out of Vassar College and into the military. The training in the military, although viewed by some to be harsh, was a cakewalk compared to the hell endured at *The Family School*.

My trust issues were never resolved after leaving *The Family*, and the nightmares remain. Ultimately, these psychological issues and flashbacks led to the need for my discharge from the Army, something I regret to this day. For years, I thought all this was my fault. While the nightmares and anxiety never wore off, getting high at least made it go away again.

I will not blame others for my choices and my mistakes; I take responsibility for those. What I blame *The Family* for is stripping me of my childhood. I still have nightmares of being locked up and told I am ruining my life. I still read their monthly paper of lies and get nauseous remembering what we witnessed.

The only thing I can say to temper my disdain for these types of schools or at least for *The Family* is this: While the programs, as they are, have little positive effect long term, I do believe that kids in my position need some sort of help. I believe there can be a safe solution, as some staff are genuinely decent and caring people. We need oversight and regulation of these facilities, with swift and severe penalties for those who stray from the standards.

What must be remembered through all of this is that these success stories that these places put out tend to fall in the 1-to 2-year range after leaving such programs and are usually the opinions of parents. A true statistic? Of the 25 kids from my graduation class and the one prior to mine, maybe four remain sober. While many can now say they live successful lives, it came anywhere between 5 and 10 years after leaving the program and figuring out life on their own with psychiatric help. Unfortunately, this cannot be said for all.

The programs are quick to take credit for a successful story and are just as fast to claim that anyone that doesn't make it just didn't work the program. The truth? The nightmares and psychological scars of being dragged from your home to a place in the middle of nowhere, restrained in blankets and duct tape, assaulted, verbally and physically-those scars and that trauma never go away.

For my friends who have since died from suicide because of the nightmares or those who still suffer the nightmares, our time and our voice will not be in vain. There comes a time for every man to make amends and right their wrongs. This is a lesson all these programs preach, and it is a lesson they should now follow" (Congress, 2008:17-20; original emphasis).

In 2014, representatives of Allynwood Academy gave a presentation to the House of Commons in the UK. According to Allynwood Academy's website, "After being invited by the CEO of the Addiction Recovery Foundation and editor of *Intervene* magazine, three representatives from Allynwood Academy, Jeff Brain (Executive Dean of Admissions), Richard Reeve (Head of School), and Dr. Rita Argiros (Executive Program Director) gave a presentation to the House of Commons in Parliament on the effect of Cannabis on children in the United States and how Allynwood Academy deals with such issues. There are no therapeutic boarding schools in the U.K. that deal with issues for adolescents at risk to things like Cannabis addiction, relationship issues, and emotional issues...Brain ended the presentation by discussing the technical terms of the school such as payment and what it has to offer (therapy, school, internships, drama, music, activities, etc.). Afterwards Jeff said "It was such an honor to speak before Parliament and I was impressed with the passion and commitment of the parents, professionals, and officials as they are working together to help save the lives of their young people" (Allynwood Academy, 2015b).

The following are extracts from a few of the statements made by other former students of the Family Foundation School (later renamed Allynwood Academy):

*“...I was removed from my parents house on April 15, 2004 by two escorts and brought to the Family Foundation School... I would like to point out that I was a 15 year old boy... I wasn't sent to FFS for drugs or alcohol or drug use. I had smoked marijuana once and drank a handful of times. I was sent to the school for anger issues as well as poor grades and family issues. Within my first few days of being at the school I was being forced to eat cream of wheat and soy burgers at all my meals. I was not allowed to eat anything else. This was a result of my refusal to memorize prayers as well as the 12 steps to alcoholics anonymous. I was then forced to sit in the corner facing the wall. I was not allowed to get up from that corner without raising my hand and waiting to be called on...This was just a start to 4 years of traumatizing and humiliating treatment that I was forced to go through...” Submitted By: Alex Dellinger (Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014c).*

*“I was in The Family School from late August of 2001 to May 1st 2002, approximately nine months...I was forced to do home work, read the AA book or the bible in the mornings, and then work in the afternoons. The ‘work’ was awful. We were outside in the cold and the snow, carrying buckets of rocks to a path that was already laid out in stone, dumping the rocks on the path, and then walking back to repeat...” Submitted By: E. V. (Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014b).*

*“I was at the FFS for 6 agonizing months. I honestly don't know how the people that were there for years lasted. I always wondered how people let themselves get brainwashed in cults...I was in the corner so many times I can't remember. You had to sit the corner, look down and couldn't talk to anyone. They also made me miss school to sit in the corner all day. I missed more school in the FFS than when I was on home schooling. My education level did not improve and I was failing classes. In FFS you had to get a B to pass. I was getting more and more frustrated and whenever I showed the slightest sign of anger or depression I was rolled in a blanket and duct tape and thrown in the janitor closet alone for hours, one time a whole day. I couldn't use the rest room and was forced to urinate myself. When they saw what I had done they called me a disgusting pig and threw me in a scalding hot shower with my clothes on and threw insults at me. The abuse was getting so bad that I was suicidal and started wetting my bed. I wasn't getting better at the FFS I was getting worse. I was forced to tell my parents how happy I was there...Upon leaving I developed severe anxiety disorder and didn't know how to socialize with others.”- Submitted By: Melanie Bilcik (Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014d).*

*“I attended the Family Foundation School from January 1999-September 2000...The FFS bases its system on the 12 steps of AA. Each student was expected to work this program. They told us that we were all sick and needed to get well. They told us we were all addicts and that we would be addicts forever. If you couldn't admit that you were an addict then you would get lectured by staff. We were told that our lives had been out of control and unmanageable back home. I had never drank, done a drug, or had sex before, so my sponsor told me I could call myself an anger addict. I saw kids get labeled as drug addicts that had tried marijuana once or twice. I saw girls get labeled sex addicts for having sex once or twice. None of the staff who worked directly with us had any sort of mental health or psychology degrees. Many had been in AA for years and had been heavy drug users and alcoholic when there were young. Some had been in prison or jail. They acted like experience over education and certification was enough to counsel teens in drugs, alcohol, sex, eating disorders, and emotional problems. After a while, staff would label you as being addicted to things besides what you had arrived with. My sponsor told me I had a food problem...A daily schedule would consist of; church in the morning, classes until 6pm, and an AA meeting or church at night. We were rushed from one thing to the next, constantly being told to move faster. The environment was highly confrontational. If you saw a student breaking a rule, you were expected to confront them. You would receive consequences for not holding your peers accountable...One night I got really sick. I woke up feeling like I was about to die. Everything hurt. I started throwing up and losing control of my bowels...I stayed in [a] tiny room with several other sick kids, continuing to throw up for two days. I never saw a doctor...The real horror came after that. My bed and comforter still had my feces and throw up on it. I asked several staff about having these items washed and each one said no...and I spent each night on that comforter and mattress with no one even caring that I was sleeping in my own bodily wastes...The staff used very humiliating techniques to “get us better”. The main thing the FFS practiced were table topics. During each meal one or more students would be called up and be confronted on something wrong they had been caught doing...The students and staff that were sitting took turns giving feedback. Oftentimes, the feedback would include derogatory words and screaming. Students were highly expected to participate with staff in the screaming. The more you criticized whoever was standing up, the more praise you got from staff...Sex and lust were a big part of the table topics. Very often, you were made to stand up and share every little detail of you[r] past- including sexual*



experiences or masturbation habits. Girls had to share these secrets while male staff and male students watched, and vice versa. You would be told how dirty you were. Staff always trying to get us to admit to masturbation, which they thought was very evil and selfish...I saw girls get humiliated and called whores at the table...I almost cried during one girl's table topic. Tony Argiros ([the] man who owned the school) came in and kept screaming and asking her how many boys had ever touched her vagina. He screamed so loud that I wanted to cover my ears. He went on and on for almost an hour. And all of this right while we were eating...Often staff didn't approve of the way the student responded to their table topic. This would result in being made to sit in the corner and face the wall. They couldn't get out of the corner until they admitted their "wrong"... You could receive something called a sanction if [it] would help you see your wrongs. A sanction could consist of doing meaningless yard work or cleaning. Some sanctions were meant to give the student humility. An example would be making you wear a sign that said [what] was wrong with you. The sign would say things like "My name is \_ and I'm a drug addict, or I'm a liar etc...I saw some disturbing sanctions during my stay. I saw a girl being forced to dig her own grave outside. They said this would help her realize that she really would be in a grave if she didn't follow the school's recovery plans. Another girl was made to carry cinder blocks up and down the road in January. Another sick sanction was the poverty sanction. This was given to kids that acted spoiled. Every comfort would be taken away, including bedding. While I was there several students were made to sleep on the floor or with no blanket. Winter months would not exclude you from this sanction...You could be put in isolation or restrained solely because of your negative attitude towards AA or staff. One day a boy told Tom Musgrove that he wasn't going to buy in to the program. Tom grabbed him and threw him in the door, busting a hole through the wood... We also took a class called Life Skills. Life skills was a class in which we were instructed in proper moral living, sexual ethics, and Alcoholics Anonymous jargon. We had to memorize large sections of the AA book and be able to recite it. There was also no comprehensive sex education. We were never taught about birth control, safe sex, STDs, or even married life sex. We were basically told that any attraction to the opposite sex is lustful and selfish. Working the program took priority over getting an education. Many students were held back because they were not complying with the schools principles. Sometimes student[s] that were nearing the graduation time were told they would not be receiving their diplomas. It didn't matter what kind of student you were, you could not graduate unless you worked AA...Our sleep was often disrupted by runaways. Whenever someone ran away, an alarm would go off and stay like that for an hour or so. No one could go back to bed until the alarm stopped because it would allow for more runaways. Sometimes we had to go out and help staff find the run away. There was one staff in particular [who] was obsessed with AA. On evenings which she supervised we would watch endless AA movies instead of focusing on homework. She would be digging into our sleep time too, saying that these AA videos were more important. I was like "how much more AA talks do we need today, we've been consumed with AA all day." I would say that we got about an hour to work on homework during the evenings. Kids were constantly getting in trouble for not turning homework in, but what did they expect!?!...Brainwashing techniques were used. The schools motto was "to have total surrender" to the program...I observed that most of the staff had led miserable lives...They would remind us that none of us were fit for a healthy relationship with the opposite sex and that our lives would be like theirs unless we followed AA...The choir director (Paul Geer) could make life miserable for us if he wanted too. He was actively involved in AA and admitted to us that he was a recovering sex addict and food addict. He often talked about his past sex addiction in detail. He despised the idea of masturbation. One time the choir didn't sound good. He stopped us and said that one of us must have masturbated recently and contaminated the sound with their impurity. He would criticize the girls in the choir often. One time he stopped the whole choir and told a girl in the front row that she was sticking her breasts towards him and that she would be a wet rag for men one day. I would also like to mention that he lived on campus and that his basement was a dorm for some of the school's female students...When I left the FFS my pain was not over. I suffered extreme chronic pain, trauma and nightmares after the school..." – Submitted By: Grace Cole (Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014e).

In the following statement readers may find the relative geographical locations of Hankins, Hancock, East Ridge, and the town of Liberty, helpful in understanding the statement. Also, the following extracts from 24 Newsletter, October, 2013: "on October 26th...Dear, long-time East Ridge friends, Family School founders Tony and Betty A., joined us. It was great to have them singing with us again" (24 Newsletter, 2013:9). The Family Foundation School was located in Hancock, a small town/village situated on the bank of the Delaware River about 18 miles drive North of Hankins. East Ridge Community is located somewhere in a remote place overlooking the Delaware River in 77 acres of fields and woodland, the postal address is a Hankins PO Box. (24 Newsletter, 2013:8,15; AAA, 2014). The town of Liberty is about 25 miles drive East of Hankins. Hankins is about 125 miles drive North West of New York City, in Sullivan County which is in the Catskill Mountains.

“...My experience at what was then just called, “The Family,” occurred before Tony and Betty Argiros incorporated and made their “mission” of helping “addicts” into a “school...” If memory serves correctly, and it has been many years, I was living at Tony and Betty’s original house from the Spring of 1979 to the Winter of 1980. I later became a member of a community down the road with whom the Argiros family were friendly - East Ridge. I was at East Ridge, living in an apartment in a house right near there for about 6 months. They then sent me back to the Argiros home, where I stayed for a few months until I ran away...

I was in college in April 1979 and my mother had just died. I was estranged from my family due to an abusive father and relatives who would not help with that situation. I was in the middle of grieving the death of my mother when I went to a health fair at my college. It was there that I had first contact with Annie Argiros, who told me that she and her family had a farm where people could come and live. She made it sound like a warm, loving, fun atmosphere...

Tony, and others came to collect me and my few belongings for what I thought would be a summer at the farm. I will say, at this point, that I had not been a drinker nor did I have the experience of taking drugs that they later, through abuse, forced me to state. Basically, I had to lie to them to say I had this problem in order to make their abuse stop and mental cruelty end...

During my stay there, I had to go through various stages of acceptance by The Family. They had nightly family meetings around the table and morning meetings after breakfast also. They used the method of breaking people down, but never really built them up. During my residence there, I was given “hot seat” meetings in which I had to sit on a chair in the middle of a circle. Everyone else sat around me. They screamed obscenities and accusations at me for several hours and Tony threw an ashtray full of cigarette butts and ashes at me...

I struggled through classes, commute, farm chores, hot seat meetings, sexual abuse from Tony, verbal and emotional abuse from Tony, Betty, Anne and Michelle and eventually got them to allow me to move out...

A year and a half later, I became very physically ill. I called the people at East Ridge who were friends with The Family. I began attending meetings at East Ridge and attended a seminar about health issues there. They gave me some medical help and I began to get better. However, while I was attending meetings and visiting people at East Ridge, I had to stay at The Family overnight as a guest. This was before I learned to drive, so I was dependent upon them to get me to and from any connection to transportation back to my city apartment...

Since I had made a good connection with someone at East Ridge and my year at school was coming to a close, and with much pressure from the folks at East Ridge to continue to save my health, I moved to a small apartment in Hankins. After about six months in Hankins, during which time I experienced repeated health problems, emotional abuse from Tom Powers (the leader of East Ridge) and some of his followers, as well as financial problems due to lack of employment in the area, I was called into a meeting with Tom Powers, Tony and Betty Argiros. At that time, Tom said I would never belong anywhere and that I needed to beg Tony and Betty to take me back. Tony and Betty agreed to take me back. That night, I drove back to The Family with Tony and Betty. I think this was in 1983... As soon as we got in the door of the house, Tony called a family meeting. He told everyone that I was not to speak unless spoken to, that I was sent back because of too much pride and couldn’t make it in the outside world...I felt stuck and totally depressed...One morning, after my chores of shoveling manure in the cow barn in the winter without adequate clothing, we had a family meeting. I mentioned that it had been my turn to be able to use the rubber farm boots but that one of the other residents took them and would not let me use them. I was immediately placed in a hot seat meeting and berated for about a half hour for being lazy and a failure, and a spoiled brat... I ran down the road and hitched a ride to the apartment in Hankins where I had been living while at East Ridge. My belongings were still there. I gathered what I could in a total panic because I knew that the Argiros van would come looking for me as soon as Michelle told them she had not picked me up...

I hitched a ride into Liberty and got a \$5 Greyhound ticket to the city to meet my friend. She and her husband met me when I came off the bus. Due to my lack of income, I was immediately homeless. I wound up going to the YWCA and the counselors there gave me a room...Thankfully, the counselors at the YWCA were skilled and helpful. They helped to undo some of this brainwashing and friends I had previously made in the city encouraged and helped me to get back into college...” – Submitted By: M.P. (Family Foundation School Truth Campaign, 2014a).

All Addicts Anonymous claims to be “The original Program of Alcoholics Anonymous as adapted for all addicts and all addictions ... AAA members are distinctive in their acceptance of a suggested program of Four Absolutes, Twelve Steps, and Ten Points” (24 Newsletter, 2013:2). Although it is claimed that “thousands of addicts and terminally-ill people have passed through its Doors” (24 Newsletter, 2013:3), the people living at East Ridge are

*“twenty-nine men, women, and children...and many working associates across the country”* (24 Newsletter, 2013:8). The All Addicts Anonymous website lists only one AAA group, the Upstate Group of All Addicts Anonymous in Hankins (AAA, 2014, 2014a) and East Ridge Recovery Center (AAA, 2014, 2014b). The publishing arm of All Addicts Anonymous, 24 Communications Inc.(AAA, 2014), broadcasts on You Tube as “24COMMTV’s channel,” featuring talks by Tom P. Sr and Tom P. Jr (AAA, 2014c). 24COMMTV also features an outreach project of the Upstate Group of All Addicts Anonymous, a fundraising concert singing the folk song “I’m an alcoholic!” The fundraising concert was held at ‘Stepping Stones’, a house formerly the home of Bill W, in aid of restoring a musical instrument alleged to be Bill W.’s cello (AAA, 2014d).

A chaplain at Austin Recovery, Austin, Texas, described his visit to East Ridge community in “Recovery Today” in 2012: *“...the home of All Addicts Anonymous, a group that had quietly spun off from A. A. nearly fifty years before. They had left, not in anger, but in a bold experiment of faith – an experiment to live out “in community” the original vision of the Alcoholics Anonymous Program...the little group purchased 45 acres of land in a remote section of the Catskill Mountains and set out in pursuit of their dream. They carried with them and kept alive the Four Absolutes from the Oxford Group on which the 12 Steps had been built: Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love. They also took the 10 Points of their AAA Program that captures the heart and soul of Chapter Five in the Big Book. Then they began offering spiritual help and healing to addicts of nearly every sort imaginable. They offered help to drug addicts, to compulsive smokers, to crazy eaters, to gamblers, fornicators, masturbators, depressives, worriers and to liars – in other words, to any and all of us willing to admit to having more than just a drinking problem. Their leader was Thomas E. Powers, whose original sponsor was none other than Bill Wilson himself..”*

*Powers became a Christian but never a very narrow-gauge one. Tom said that “along the way [to recovery], I was mothered and taught by spiritual mongrels [fellow AAs of a variety of religious persuasions]...”*

*Although the senior Tom and Bill Wilson went their separate ways in the 1960s, Bill wished him well in his search for a stronger model of recovery. While Bill maintained his stewardship of the original Fellowship he had co-founded with Dr. Bob, Tom pressed on toward the development of an application of the original principles of AA for everyone...*

*Over the years, Tom, along with his son Tom, Jr., proved to be gifted writers. They published an incredible number of thought-provoking and spiritually challenging articles in 24 Magazine...*

*In 1976 Tom Jr. wrote an article for 24 Magazine called, **Three Ways to Work the 12-Step Program:** ([http://www.alladdictsanonymous.org/articles\\_twelvesteps.htm](http://www.alladdictsanonymous.org/articles_twelvesteps.htm)) In the original article, which has become a classic in AA circles, he argues persuasively as to why the original, strong version of the 12-Step Program is necessary for addicts who are prone to relapse or who suffer from multiple addictions” (Austin Recovery, 2012; Original Emphasis).*

The article “Three Ways to Work the 12-Step Program” is also titled “Gresham’s Law and Alcoholics Anonymous.” (AAA, 2014e)

24 Newsletter “Book Store and Gift Shop” advertises a number of products for sale (24 Newsletter, 2013:13-15) including Tom P Speaker CDs, East Ridge prayer counters and rosaries, Bible Lectionary, various pamphlets and books including “Three Ways to be Anonymous” by Tom P. Jr. and the book *“Invitation to a Great Experiment”*, by Thomas E Powers, published in 1979 (Brown University, 2010). 24 Newsletter advertises the book, alongside a quoted endorsement by *“...Fr. Sam Shoemaker, AA Pioneer (from dust jacket of 1st ed.)”* and also, that *“...Father Ed had written to Tom Powers...who had just published a book [Invitation to a Great Experiment]...”* (24 Newsletter, 2013:13)

It may be noted that Father Ed, a Catholic Jesuit priest, who was known to some early A.A. members, died on April 3rd 1960 (AA Grapevine, 1960). This was nineteen years before Tom P’s book was published in 1979. Dr Sam Shoemaker, who was known to some early A.A. members, as an Oxford Group member and rector of Calvary Episcopal Church, New York, died in 1963 (New York Times, 1963). This was sixteen years before Tom P’s “Invitation to a Great Experiment” was published in 1979.

Tom P. Sr died in 2005, (Brown University, 2010) Tom P. Jr died in 2013 (24 Newsletter, 2013:1)

The 110th Congress hearing *“Child Abuse and Deceptive Marketing by Residential Programs for Teens”* is published by the U.S. Printing Office and may be viewed at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-110hrg41839/pdf/CHRG-110hrg41839.pdf>

The Family foundation School was not the only TC based school to implicate A.A. in the 110th Congress child abuse hearing. The following are extracts from a witness statement made by a former student of the Mission Mountain School in Montana.

*“At the age of 13, I was diagnosed with chronic depression following a suicide attempt and hospitalized at a local psychiatric hospital. When I was discharged, lacking any community-based support, my family sought to identify services outside of my community and found Mission Mountain School at the recommendation of a hired educational consultant. Mission Mountain School held great promise, as it was sold to us as a small, family-like therapeutic environment for girls ages 12- 18 with above-average intelligence...Because all the founders were members of A.A., it seemed to them that everyone was an addict of sorts. I was deemed an alcoholic and a sex addict. A close friend was deemed a sex addict. She had never had sex in her life and denied the claim. And as a result, staff forced her to carry six large rocks on her back at all times for several months, naming them issues like “sexual abuse” and “sex addiction,” causing bruising along her spine” (Congress, 2008:13,14).*

A critique of “Gresham’s Law and Alcoholics Anonymous,” an example of deceptive marketing of Alcoholics Anonymous by 24 Communications Inc. - All Addicts Anonymous, may be viewed online at <http://aacultwatch.blogspot.co.uk/>

## 4.2 Clarence S., Mitchell K., Came to Believe Retreats

Clarence S. was a founder of the first A.A. group in Cleveland, Ohio, whose recollections of early A.A. are featured in the A.A. Conference Approved publications ‘*Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*’ and ‘*Pass It On*’. According to various historical records, he had an “*abrasive personality*” (Mitchell K., 1997:149; A.A.W.S Inc., 1984:257). “*He became very hostile toward Bill W. He opposed the traditions and continued to use his full name in public. He led a small group to oppose the Conference and the General Service Office*” (Silkworth.net, 2015). “*...his A.A. work became increasingly Christian fundamentalist in nature*” (Silkworth.net, 2015). Clarence S. was of the opinion that A.A. had become “*..all watered down..*” (A.A. World Services Inc., 1980:261). This opinion, however, was not shared by all the A.A. Old-timers. When interviewed in 1977, Warren C., thought the A.A. programme was just the same as it was when he joined A.A. in Cleveland in 1939 (AA World Services Inc., 1980:262).

By 1942, Clarence S. had fallen out with both of AA’s co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob: “*...Clarence had a confrontation with Dr. Bob that “kind of injured our relationship. I looked up to Dr. Bob and was disillusioned” Clarence said. “It’s one of those things you wish had never happened, but it did.” (A.A.W.S. Inc., 1980:268). “...By 1942, Bill was not in such favour with Clarence and his faction in Cleveland as in earlier days. In the years to come, there were further clashes, over finances, policy, the start of the A.A. General Service Conference, and other matters. The criticism was directed more at Bill than at Bob..” (A.A.W.S. Inc., 1980:270). “...Bitterest of all, perhaps was the falling out that Clarence S., founder of Cleveland A.A., had with Bill ... they began to hear reports of several Cleveland groups wanting to secede and break away from Bill’s brand of A.A...” (A.A.W.S. Inc., 1984:255). See also, “Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age”, pages 193-194. According to Bill W., “This incredible but more than half-believed fantasy hit Dr. Bob and me quite hard. Fortunately I happened to have with me a certified audit of all our affairs right from the beginning” (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:193).*

In the 1950s Clarence S. was involved in a small, short lived “back to basics” movement known as the “Orthodox Movement.” According to fundamentalist author Mitchell K., who was sponsored by Clarence S., “*The Orthodox Movement’s goals were to keep the A.A. movement true to its original intent and purpose. Orthodox members felt that the new direction which A.A. was beginning to take would water down or dilute the effectiveness and success which the movement to that date had achieved*” (Mitchell K., 1997:208). Among the movement’s leaders was a non-alcoholic Oxford Group member, Henrietta Seiberling (Mitchell K., 1997:208). Although Henrietta Seiberling was helpful to the early A.A. members between 1935 and 1939, insofar as the alcoholics in the Mid-West were being indoctrinated into Oxford Group practices and their meetings were under the control of the Oxford Group, (A.A.W.S. Inc. 1980:157) she was vigorously opposed to the formation of A.A. and continued to criticise its development (A.A.W.S Inc., 1980:217,218; Mitchell K., 1997:208). Whether the “Orthodox Movement” described by Mitchell K. was in fact a serious movement, or whether it represented just a small group of disgruntled Cleveland A.A. members, still under the coercive influence of Henrietta Seiberling is open to question.

According Mitchell K., *“In his later years, Clarence traveled around the country, speaking and carrying the message of a changed life to those who wanted to hear it. Local meetings had a difficult time with Clarence. For the most part they didn’t seem to want to hear his particular brand of A.A. The saying that a prophet in his own town is without honor fit Clarence well. There were those too, with whom Clarence found favor. These were usually people who found Clarence’s interpretation of what A.A. should be like to be in their best interest. These, at first, were few. Their numbers grew”* (Mitchell K., 1997:214). Clarence S. died in 1984 (Silkworth.net, 2015).

An Oxford Group orientated weekend retreat business called *“Came to Believe”* was founded by Clarence S. in 1966 (Came to Believe, 2015b).

According to the ‘Came to Believe’ website, *“Clarence passed on to his widow Grace, to his many sponsees and grandsponsees who are alive today, and through his retreats the specific Bible, Oxford Group, and devotional ideas that enabled early AAs to succeed so well. Moreover, Clarence, like Dr. Bob, felt there was no need to stay sick. People could recover and alcoholics who took the Steps, trusted God, and abided by the Four Absolutes (Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love) did recover and stayed recovered. Bob took people through the six steps in an afternoon. Clarence took thousands through the Twelve Steps in two days...the retreat team expanded as new sponsees took the idea home with them...During Clarence’s last days, he challenged us to “carry the message to other alcoholics” by continuing the retreats and by assisting those who wished to start retreats in new areas”* (Came to Believe, 2015b). The retreat business now operates internationally with 10 locations in USA, 6 locations in England and one in Dublin, Ireland, advertising taking of the Twelve Steps *“as the A.A. founders taught ... in one day!”* (Came to Believe, 2015a; 2015c). In England, 14 retreats are scheduled for 2015, locations in Kent, Devon, Derbyshire, Essex, Liverpool and Bristol/Bath (Came to Believe, 2015c).

In 1999, Mitchell K. published a biography of Clarence S. which included his interpretation of how A.A. developed in Cleveland, entitled *“How it Worked, The Story of Clarence H. Snyder and the Early Days of Alcoholics Anonymous in Cleveland, Ohio.”* According to Mitchell K., *“In 1983, Clarence asked me if I would write his biography and the history of A.A. in Cleveland, Ohio. The book, Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers had been out for three years but Clarence felt that there was more to the story that needed to be told. He instructed me as to how he wanted the book to be written”* (Mitchell K., 1997:5,6). Dick B. assisted with the editing of the book (Mitchell K., 1997:7).

In 2005, three of Clarence S’s sponsees and their wives published a Twelve Step guide entitled *“Our A.A. Legacy to the Faith Community”*. Explicitly Oxford Group orientated, with liberal quotes from the Bible throughout, the guide divides the Twelve Steps into four phases: *“Admission,” “Submission,” “Restitution”* and *“Construction and Maintenance”* based on the Oxford Group’s *“Four Absolutes”*. (Came to Believe publications, 2005:8,9). The guide was compiled and edited by Dick B. (Came to Believe publications, 2005). The following are a scans of pages 26 and 28, illustrating part of the “Submission Phase.”

## The Submission Phase

### REFLECTIONS BY THE OLD-TIMERS:

We submit ourselves to the care of God to become different on the inside (our will) and on the outside (our life). And that is a life changing experience!

Clarence Snyder's faith in the Steps was based on his favorite Bible verse, 2 Corinthians 5:17: *"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."*

Harold Hill said: "Where God says 'therefore,' He is saying, 'Now get a load of this.'" Harold also said he had studied about a lot of gods including Buddha, Zoroaster, Zen, Confucius, Yoga, Edgar Cayce, and found they were all dead. He needed a live God, and Jesus was the only one that came back from the dead and appeared to more than five hundred. (*1 Cor. 15:3-6*)

Now that we have made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God, we have come to the same point that Clarence, Dr. Bob, Bill Wilson and these Old-timers did. We have to decide whether Jesus is who He said He was, or He was a liar. Clarence said, "at this point we hire a New Manager."

Now we take our Third Step Prayer on our knees, just as the Old-timers did. First, take a minute to read the prayer to yourself. Then, read the following prayer out loud, all together, on our knees:


Figure 4.2: Scan of page 26, "Our A.A. Legacy to the Faith Community", Came to Believe Publications, 2005

## The Submission Phase

We have now taken the Third Step. According to Clarence, we are now “in A.A.”

**DO NOT DEPEND ON FEELINGS**

The Promise of God's Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The Christian lives by the faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship between **fact** (God and His Word), **faith** (our trust in God and His Word), and **feeling** (the result of our faith and obedience) (John 14:21).



The train will run with or without the caboose. However, it would be useless to attempt to pull the train by the caboose. In the same way, we, as Christians, do not depend on feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word.

*\*Used with permission of Campus Crusade for Christ.*

This illustration helps us understand that, the day we pray this prayer, God has taken over our life, whether we feel like it or not. We don't have to be good enough to turn our lives over to God, only willing. He will be with us, to help us change, as we take the following steps. It is just as if we had made a legal commitment. Emotions are not an issue. We sign this to confirm in our own mind that we now have a New Manager.

**2 Corinthians  
5:17**

*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

*I have taken Step Three.*

**Luke 15:10**

*In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 4.3: Scan of page 28, “Our A.A. Legacy to the Faith Community”, Came to Believe Publications, 2005

### 4.3 Dick B., Freedom Ranch Maui Inc., International Christian Recovery Coalition, Overcomer's Outreach

When he [the devil] speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it (John 8:44).

- So also “absolute purity.”

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee, for it is profitable that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matthew 5:29-30).

- And “absolute unselfishness.”

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

- And “absolute love.”

A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34).

- **The shortcomings and sins they unearthed were to be cast out in a total life-change.**

- They were to confess to God and to another the wrongdoing they had identified.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16).

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Figure 4.4: Page 42, *By the Power of God*, A Guide to Early A.A. Groups & Forming Similar Groups Today, by Dick B., Paradise Research publications Inc., 2000, by arrangement with Good Book Publishing Company



Dick B. claims to have joined A.A. in 1986. According to Dick B., *“In 1986, he was felled by alcoholism, gave up his law practice, and began recovery as a member of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. In 1990, his interest in AA’s Biblical/Christian roots was sparked by his attendance at A.A.’s International Convention in Seattle* (Dick B., 2000; 2015d). Dick B. has since published 33 books, 120 articles and 30 audio talks on what he claims to be “Alcoholics Anonymous” history (Dick B., 2015d). Dick B is the owner of the Good Book Publishing Company (Dick B., 2000). Dick B.’s books are published by Paradise Research Publications Inc., a publisher who shares the same mailing address with the Good Book Publishing Company, Freedom Ranch Maui Inc., the International Christian Recovery Coalition and Dick B.’s ‘Residence’: *P.O. Box 837, Kihei, Maui HI, 96753-0837* (Dick B.,2000) *P.O. Box 837, Kihei, HI, 96753-0837* (Dick B., 2015a) and *P.O. Box 837, Kihei, Maui, Hawaii, 96753-0837, USA* (Dick B., 2015b, 2015c).

Freedom Ranch Maui Inc., a tax exempt not-for profit corporation, was established in 2003 as a *“Faith Based Christian Educational Training Program’* with a mission to *“bring alcoholics and addicts to reliance on the Creator for cure through prayer and study of His Word and becoming a new person in Christ”* (Dick B., 2015b). Freedom Ranch Maui Inc.’s website is named *“ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS HISTORY Dick B.’s Website”* (Dick B., 2015b). The executive director of Freedom Ranch Maui Inc. is Richard Gordon Burns JD (Dick B.,2015b), who writes under the pseudonym “Dick B” (Dick B., 2015c). Richard Gordon Burns JD also describes himself as *“Dick B.: THE “REAL” POWER BEHIND ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS THE POWER OF ALMIGHTY GOD”* in his internet blog (Dick B., 2015c). Richard Gordon Burns JD is also the executive director of the International Christian Recovery Coalition (Dick B., 2015e).

The International Christian Recovery Coalition is an *“...international fellowship comprised of Christian leaders and workers in the recovery arena...”* who’s mission is *“To glorify God by: (1) sharing accurate information with Christian leaders, workers, newcomers, and other participants in the recovery arena about the roles played by God, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Bible in early A.A.’s astonishing successes; and (2) showing Christian leaders and workers in the recovery arena how they can substantially enhance their effectiveness by including in their recovery efforts the ‘old-school’ principles and practices of First Century Christianity employed by the Christian pioneers of early Alcoholics Anonymous and the Christian Recovery Movement”* (Dick B., 2015a).

Overcomers Outreach is an international network of 12 Step support groups, directed by Jeff Mcleod, a leader of the Christian Recovery Coalition (Dick B., 2015e; Overcomers Outreach, 2015e). According to Overcomers Outreach: *Overcomers Outreach is an international network of Christ centered 12 Step support groups which ministers to individuals, their families and loved ones who suffer from the consequences of any addictive behavior”* (Overcomers Outreach, 2015c). *“Overcomers Outreach is a ministry that was born out of a deep need of a support system for individuals and families within evangelical Christian churches. Overcomers Outreach support groups use the Bible and the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to minister to individuals who are affected by alcohol, mind altering drugs, sexual addiction, gambling, food and other compulsive behaviors or dependencies”* (Overcomers Outreach, 2015a). *“We utilize the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous along with Scriptures. The groups speak freely about our “higher power” in the person of Jesus Christ”* (Overcomers Outreach, 2015a). Overcomers Outreach lists 246 meetings throughout the USA, 20 in Canada, 4 in Australia, 11 in the UK, and 1 in each of the following countries: Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Pakistan and Cayman Islands. Meetings in the UK are located in Bournemouth, Warminster, Wincanton, Exeter, Stockport, Glasgow, Troon (Ayrshire), London, Mitcham(Croydon), Whyteleaf (Surrey) and Sidley, Bexhill-on-Sea (East Sussex) (Overcomers Outreach, 2015b).

The deceptive marketing of so called “Alcoholics Anonymous” history by Dick B. will be covered in section 4.7.

## 4.4 Joe McQ, The Primary Purpose Group of Dallas, Texas

Joe McQ was an addiction treatment professional who founded a number of treatment centres, beginning with Serenity House Inc. in 1971 (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015a). According to Kelly Foundation Inc., “*Joe McQuany was the founder of Serenity Park, Inc. and Kelly Foundation, Inc. in Little Rock, Arkansas... In 1972 Joe began development of Recovery Dynamics® through teaching the principles of the Twelve Steps at Serenity House, Inc. (now known as Serenity Park, Inc.)*” (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015a).

In 1973, Joe McQ (Joe McQuany) met Charlie P, at an Alanon convention (aahistory.com,2014a;2015). Charlie P. co-founded House of Hope Inc. Recovery Center in Grove, Oklahoma (Luginbuel, 2015; Pinellas County Intergroup, 2015). The duo developed “*The Big Book Comes Alive*” Program” (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015b), which was a programme of professionally presented seminars about A.A.s ‘basic text,’ conducted at A.A. conventions. (aahistory.com, 2015a) Audio recordings of their presentations were made and circulated widely in A.A. These are known as the “Joe and Charlie” tapes. The tapes were also known as “*The Big Book Study*” (aahistory.com,2015a). By the 1980s ‘Joe and Charlie’ were presenting about 36 seminars per year, worldwide. “*Studies have been given in 48 states and most Canadian provinces. Additionally, Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and the Netherlands have all hosted the Big Book Study seminars with Joe & Charlie*” (aahistory.com, 2015a).

In 1990, Joe McQ published “*The Steps We Took - A teacher of the Twelve Steps shares his experience, strength, and hope with all those recovering from addictions, all who want to recover, and all who love them.*” (Joe McQ., 1990). The following are extracts from ‘The Steps We Took’:

“*There is a story in the Bible how all this conflict began. The Garden of Eden story...the Bible says “we are God-like... So he created Adam and Eve and put them in Serenity Park...One day a snake came up to Eve and he said... “Hey Eve you’ve got self will”... Eve had never heard such a thing so she said “What’s that?”... So the snake ran it down to her. He said “You can do whatever you want to!” She couldn’t wait, she ran to tell Adam, “Adam, Adam we’ve got self – will.” He probably said “What in the world is that?” So she explained it to him...”* (pages 40,41). “*I think one of the mistakes many people are making today is this: not only as individuals, but groups of people, get together and talk about their problems. They never seem to talk about what to do about them... There is no growth in this way of doing; in fact they just magnify their problems. I call this “group sickness..”* (Page 128). “*I think Jesus may have been teaching the principle of the first step when he said “deny thyself”* (Page 19) “*Step 1 opens the door to Step 2. I like to use the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)*” (Page 24). “*The Bible says, “...ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”(John 8:32)*” (Page 25). “*David said in the 23rd psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd.”(Page 53) “It’s like in the Bible, where it says there is time for everything. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)*” (Page 64). “*Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart”* (Page 124). “*I love the passage in the Bible that says, “Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in the darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday (Psalms 91:5-6)*” (McQ., 1990).

In 2002 Joe McQ published “*Carry This Message - A Guide for Big Book Sponsorship*(Joe McQ, 2002). The following are extracts from ‘Carry This message’:

“*Without the ‘coercion’ of being sold on these ideas, we have the phenomenon of people doing strange things like taking one step a year...”* (Page 4). “*As sponsors we know, there are certain things we require of a sponsoree...he has to carry out his assignments and do the things you ask him to do”* (page 25). “*...we are working with an undisciplined person. Assignments should be given, and the sponsor should make it clear to the person that assignments have to be done by a specific time...there are certain things we require of a sponsoree... He has to carry out his assignments and do the things you ask him to do...Dr. Bob said “Get down on your knees.” And they took step 3... But an alcoholic can do just about anything you make her do. If you insist that she do certain things, she’ll get them done. She has to go from the undisciplined to the disciplined...At our treatment center, Serenity Park, we require all the clients get a sponsor within the third week...The sponsor teaches discipline...everything is working on this undisciplined person...An undisciplined person may fight discipline, but it has to be enforced to help the person...”* (Pages, 26, 27). “*You can’t just say to the sponsoree “go start on your inventory” because it might take him a month, maybe two. Create a schedule by saying something like, “We are going to work on resentments for two days” then do the other inventories similarly, with a schedule for each one which doesn’t allow the sponsoree to skimp, but moves him or her along at a good pace... (Step Four assignment). “You need to move your sponsoree along pretty fast...but you*

*need to keep the sponsoree busy and keep her moving...you should just move him right on through them bam, bam, bam, bam. Keep the momentum...”* (Page 65). *“Remember that all the people in our fellowship groups are not really alcoholics...They aren’t really alcoholics – because an alcoholic can’t do that. They don’t usually stay; they just come in and out of our fellowship. But they don’t have a message to share...”* (Page 65) (Joe McQ., 2002).

The Primary Purpose Group of Dallas, Texas, was founded by Cliff B. in January, 1988. Joe McQ was Cliff B’s sponsor and ‘mentor’ (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015b). According to Cliff B., *“We had a well defined purpose; to focus on the content of our Basic Text and improve the effectiveness of our Fellowship...Only a couple of “old timers” expressed their concern...I wish I could dig those old suckers up and let them see what happens at our meetings and what the members of our Group do between meetings...Those who make up our Group are very active in taking the message of the Big Book into those places where suffering alcoholics wind up seeking shelter and help. We try to get to them before they become “discussionized.”...So what we have in Dallas is a group of alcoholics who try to emulate the man who was our inspiration. A spark that was thrown off that spiritual bonfire, Joe McQ., landed in Dallas, Texas and ignited another spiritual bonfire which throws of many sparks and has ignited and is igniting other spiritual bonfires around the world...”* (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015b).

The Primary Purpose Group created a website and published the *“Primary Purpose Big Book Study Guide.”* Chris R. and Myers R. joined the group (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015b). Chris R. is currently *“Vice President of Recovery Services”* at Origins Recovery Center, Myers R. is employed as an *‘Alumni Support Staff Member”* (Origins Recovery, 2015, 2015a). According to Origins Recovery, *“Chris speaks for various Fellowships internationally. He has had 22 years in the treatment business in various areas including valuable roles in Alumni Services, administration and as a lecturer”* (Origins Recovery, 2015b). *“Sober since January 15th, 1988, Myers has spent the last 16 years traveling worldwide as a lecturer for 12-Step recovery groups. This experience led to his current role at Origins where he has worked for the past three years”* (Origins Recovery, 2015c).

Myers R. is in the bookbinding business and assisted Cliff B. with producing the Big Book Study Guide (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015b). Myers R.’s bookbinding business focusses on the retail of customised leather bound ‘Big Books’ and ‘Big Book’ restoration. According to Myers, *“If you have a Big Book, then you already know how important it is. Most of us (including me) owe our lives to the message this book carries. We have “marked them up” in every way imaginable and every note has a special meaning in our recovery”* (Myers Raymer, 2015a). Customised leather bound ‘Big Books’ retail at between \$80.00 - \$115.00 each. The Primary Purpose Big Book Study Guide retails at \$17.00 (Myers Raymer, 2015b).

According to Kelly Foundation Inc., *“Kelly Foundation has assisted over 500 facilities across the United States and in 8 foreign countries since 1978”* (Kelly Foundation Inc., 2015a). In the UK, Joe McQ’s Recovery Dynamics® is marketed by ‘Serenity House Bristol Alcoholism Recovery Service’ as *“...a clear, concise and correctly sequenced explanation of the original Twelve Step Recovery Programme uniquely presented in a goal oriented format that guides each individual to an understanding of The Problem, The Solution and The Plan of Action that leads to recovery”* (Serenity House, 2015a). ‘Serenity House Bristol Alcoholism Recovery Service,’ is a registered UK charity, funded by the National Lottery and located in Bristol. (Serenity House, 2015a, 2015b). The Primary Purpose Group of Dallas, Texas, lists 127 Primary Purpose Big Book Study groups in USA, Canada, Argentina, Australia, Denmark, France, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom (BBS Directory, 2015). The Primary Purpose Group has also expanded its operation to other fellowships including: Cocaine Anonymous, Al-Anon Family Groups, Drug Addicts Anonymous, Heroin Anonymous and Sex Addicts Anonymous (BBS Directory, 2015).

## 4.5 Wally P., Back To Basics Foundation Inc., Faith With Works Publishing Company

The Back to Basics programme is based on Wally P's perception of how Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners' meetings were conducted in the 1940s, combined with James H.'s *"..mission to bring the Oxford Group's teachings to a new generation of recovering alcoholics"* (Time Magazine, 2004; Back to Basics, 2015s). Wally P. started what he calls his "12 Step spiritual journey" on October 30, 1988. During the years 1993-1995 he 'researched' early A.A. meeting formats for his books. In 1996, he met James H., allegedly a member of the Oxford Group and Moral Re-Armament. James H., did not begin to attend A.A. meetings until the 1980s (Back to Basics, 2015b,c).

Wally P.'s books are published by the Faith with Works Publishing Company (Wally P., 1998), a for-profit corporation, which in 2006, was 60% owned by Wally P. (Back To Basics Foundation Inc., 2007). Wally P. is also the 'President' of the Back To Basics Foundation Inc., which is advertised as a tax exempt, 501(C)3 not-for-profit corporation (Back to Basics, 2015a). The Back To Basics Foundation's federal tax exemption, however, was automatically revoked by the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on 15th May, 2014, *"for its failure to file a Form 990 series return or notice for three consecutive years"* (IRS, 2015a).

The for-profit and not-for profit interests of Wally P. appear to be combined: Back To Basics Foundation Inc. and Faith With Works Publishing Company share the same mailing address, Fax, telephone number, and website: PO Box 91648, Tucson, AZ, 85752-1648, Tel: (520) 297-9348, Fax: (520) 297-7230, [www.aabacktobasics.org/](http://www.aabacktobasics.org/) (Back to Basics, 2015h,m,n). Appeals for funds are made for both the for-profit and not-for profit corporations on the [www.aabacktobasics.org/](http://www.aabacktobasics.org/) website (Back to Basics, 2015, f,1, n, m,). According to Wally P., *"I do not believe in 'making money out of A.A..."* (Back to Basics, 2015a). Despite this proclaimed belief, Wally invites purchasers of Back to Basics merchandise to *"Make a ton of cash by telling people about us"* (Back to Basics, 2015g). According to Wally, *"Our unique affiliate program allows you to generate a solid income, with little work by you. We have developed the tools you need to be successful. You will receive your own unique URL which will automatically track all sales you generate. We even provide you with banner ads and text links that you can just choose, copy & paste! Be on your way to success today, sign up now!"* (Back to Basics, 2015g). The 'not-for-profit' Back to Basics Foundation Inc.'s website retails for-profit Faith With Works Publishing Company books, along with Back to Basics DVDs, CDs, and T-Shirt in various sized packages with a price range from \$23.50 to \$115.00 (Back to Basics, 2015d). The 'not for profit' Back To Basics Foundation Inc. pays rent to the for-profit Faith with Works Publishing Company for utilisation of "office space and equipment" (Back To Basics Foundation Inc., 2006, 2007). For example, contributions received by the Back to Basics Foundation Inc., declared to the IRS for the year 2005, amounted to \$3,707; of this, \$2,400 rent was paid to the Faith With Works Publishing Company (Back To Basics Foundation Inc., 2006). It is not known how much Wally P. makes from his 60% share in the for-profit Faith With Works Publishing Company.

The Back to Basics programme operates as "Project Hope," part of a Therapeutic Community (TC) project in Henrico County Jail East, Richmond, Virginia, called *"Project HOPE & Project Fresh Start, Intense Addictions Focus Program"* (Back to Basics 2015p; Henrico County Virginia, 2015). According to Henrico County, *"Named 'PROJECT HOPE' by the participants, this fourteen-hour per day program at Henrico County's Jail East offers a long-term, jail-based addictive behaviors treatment program to inmates. The program consists of separate housing for participants which becomes a milieu in which persons can take a good, hard, honest look at themselves. Members are interviewed prior to being included in the program in order to determine their appropriateness and motivation for the program. This program is not funded by any additional taxpayer money and considered to be unique in its approach* (Henrico County Virginia, 2015; original emphasis).

A number of 2002 news reports covering the Back to Basics/ Henrico County Jail programme are available to view on the Back to Basics website. According to one report, *"... It is based on the Alcoholics Anonymous step program and enters its third year with an 80-deep waiting list and \$73,000 in new funding on the way to add three part-time positions. "We wanted to find ways to occupy their time, other than watching TV," said Henrico Sheriff Michael L. Wade. The program uses existing staff and volunteers, and each pod has a six member leadership group. The canteen fund is tapped to purchase books, videos and other materials..."* (Back to Basics, 2015Q).



Figure 4.5: “Ninety-six-year-old James Houck discusses his 67 years of sobriety with inmates who are recovering drug and alcohol addicts at Henrico Jail East. Houck is one of the last surviving members of the Oxford Group, which spawned Alcoholics Anonymous. (Photo courtesy of Tom Lappas/Henrico Citizen)” (Photo and caption by Henrico County Virginia (Henrico County Virginia, 2015).



Figure 4.6: “Photo:Stephen Conroy/Richmond.com Inmates at Henrico Regional Jail East close a New Beginnings session with a group prayer.”(Photo and caption by Back to Basics (Back to Basics, 2015Q).

Apart from what they have said about themselves, very little is known about Wally P. and James H. until they arrived on the ‘12-step recovery’ scene in the 1980s. While Wally describes himself as an ”Archivist, Historian

and Author,” his books are self-published and he gives no record of any credentials. His writing contains many contradictions and statements which cannot be independently verified by reliable sources. For example, According to Wally, “*James attended Oxford Group meetings with Bill Wilson in Frederick, MD from 1935-1937...James remained in the Oxford Group...James remained with the fellowship even after it changed its name to Moral Re-Armament in 1938. He didn’t attend A.A. meetings until the 1980’s...James H. was a member of the Oxford Group in the 1930’s and is a member of Moral Re-Armament today...*” (Back to Basics, 2015c). While James H. may have been a member of the Oxford Group and Moral Rearmament, there is no historical record in Alcoholics Anonymous published literature that Bill W. met James H. or attended Oxford Group meetings in Frederick, MD.

Prior to the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill W. attended Oxford Group meetings in New York and Akron. (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957, 1980, 1984). Frederick MD, is approximately 300 miles travel by road from Akron and 230 miles from New York. Wally P. writes that James H. did not attend A.A. meetings in the 1940s, but upon appearing at A.A. meetings in the 1980s, he expressed the view that “*At these meetings, he saw people practicing a program that did not even remotely resemble the “original” program of the 1940’s*” (Back to Basics, 2015c). If James H. did not attend A.A. meetings in the 1940s, how could he make this comparison? How could he know what A.A. meetings were practicing in the 1940s if he did not attend them? James H’s story of meeting Bill W. however, has been published in Time Magazine and reached Wikipedia: “*..It was at those Oxford Group meetings that H. befriended Bill Wilson, a.k.a. Bill W., a chronic drinker who would go on to co-found Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) in 1939...H. remembers Wilson well, and after a 40 year career as an electrical engineer and salesman, he has made it his mission to bring the Oxford Group’s teachings to a new generation of recovering alcoholics...H. wants to restore the old methods the Oxford Group used, in particular its spiritual aspects, which he believes are stronger and more effective than the ones currently practiced in A.A. The principles of the group live on in the Back to Basics organization, which follows a 12 step program similar to that originally used by A.A. H. has been trying to apply Back to Basics techniques in federal and state prisons and is working directly with 300 prisoners in the Henrico County Jail East, in Richmond, Va.*” (Time Magazine, 2004; Back to Basics, 2015s) “*...In September 2004, at the age of 98, Houck was still active in the group, now renamed Moral Rearmament, and it was his mission to restore the Oxford Group’s spiritual methods through the Back to Basics program, a twelve step program similar to AA. Houck believed the old Oxford spiritual methods were stronger and more effective than the ones currently practiced in A.A. Houck was trying to introduce the program into the prison systems. Houcks assessment of Wilson’s time in the Oxford group: He was never interested in the things we were interested in; he only wanted to talk about alcoholism; he was not interested in giving up smoking; he was a ladies man and would brag of his sexual exploits with other members, and in Houck’s opinion he remained an agnostic*” (Wikipedia, 2015b). It may be noted that Wikipedia makes the following appeal about the article from which this extract is taken: “*This article may rely excessively on sources too closely associated with the subject, potentially preventing the article from being verifiable and neutral. Please help improve it by replacing them with more appropriate citations to reliable, independent, third-party sources. (May 2015)*” (Wikipedia, 2015b).

According to Wally, “*He is the originator of the Back to Basics Beginners’ Meetings, which have grown to more than 2,200 groups, and produced more than 120,000 recoveries since its reintroduction into the Twelve Step community in 1997*”(Back to Basics, 2015b). The Back to Basics website, however, only lists 202 meetings in USA/Canada, 1 in Panama and 1 in South Africa (Back to Basics, 2015r).

Love. This test will help us determine if what we have written is consistent with God's will or self-will.

Next, the author instructs us to check what we have put on paper. Here is where your sponsor or sharing partner can be very helpful:

**Check**

"When in doubt and when it is important, what does another person who is living two-way prayer think about this thought or action? More light comes in through two windows than one. Someone else who also wants God's plan for our lives may help us see more clearly.

"Talk over together what you have written. Many people do this. They tell each other what guidance has come. This is the secret of unity. There are always three sides to every question—your side, my side, and the right side. Guidance shows us which is the right side—not who is right, but what is right."  
("How to Listen to God," p. 3)

Then, the author explains what, to many of us, is the most difficult part of all:

**Obey**

"Carry out the thoughts that have come. You will only be sure of guidance as you go through with it. A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat is moving. As you obey, very often the results will convince you that you are on the right track."  
("How to Listen to God," p. 3)

Figure 4.7: Scan of Page 120, *Back To Basics The Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners' Meetings* by Wally P., Faith With Works publishing Company. Showing "How to Listen to God" and "the secret of unity"  
(Wally P., 1997/2001)

It is time to make a commitment to work with others. Will those who have taken the first Eleven Steps, please stand. This is the Twelfth Step question.

**“Will you carry this message to other alcoholics?”**

Please answer, one at a time, “yes” or “no.” After you have answered, please be seated.

[Have each newcomer answer the question.]

According to the “Big Book” authors, those who answered “yes” to this question have taken Step Twelve. This is a monumental achievement. Congratulations.

We are going to close this session by reading two key passages about the recovery process. The first one is on page 164, starting with the second paragraph. It emphasizes the importance of guidance and the necessity of working with others:

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.

“Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear



## 4.6 Clancy I., The Pacific Group, Plymouth Road To Recovery Group

In recent decades Clancy I gained international notoriety in A.A. for his recorded speeches and associations with groups accused of cult-like practices. In the USA, groups associated with Clancy I have been documented on the internet, the Washington Post and The Fix (see excerpts below). In the UK, documentation on the notorious Plymouth Road to Recovery Group can be found at the aacultwatch website (aacultwatch.blogspot.co.uk.) The most recent controversy surrounding the Plymouth group is the alleged theft of A.A. funds amounting to £14,000. According to aacultwatch *“We understand that not only has it been alleged that £14,000 was embezzled from the Plymouth (cult) Intergroup account but also that local group contributions sent to the intergroup have been diverted to others parts of the country to help pay the costs of bringing an “American ‘Globe Trotting’ AA Personality to the UK”. Our guess is that this would be Clancy (although there are plenty of other such parasites ‘free-loading’ off AA. Such payments are contrary to AA guidelines)”* (aacultwatch, 2015).

Wayne P., the Plymouth group’s leader is alleged to be sponsored by Clancy I. Speeches by Clancy I recorded at the Plymouth Guild Hall in 2009 are featured on the Plymouth Road to Recovery website (Road to Recovery, 2015).

Clancy I (Clancy Imislund) is Managing Director of The Midnight Mission, a rehabilitation facility in Los Angeles, whose mission includes *“12 -step philosophy, job training, education and work programs”* (The Midnight Mission, 2015a, 2015b). According to The Midnight Mission, *“Clancy is still at the top of his game. Known worldwide for his leadership in the 12step community”* (The Midnight Mission, 2015a). According to the Los Angeles Times Clancy, a former advertising executive is also *“King of Skid Row”*; *“There aren’t too many standing ovations on Skid Row, but if there were, Clancy would sure get one”* (Los Angeles Times, 1998; 2002).

According to The Fix, *“Its three decades of fame and infamy should have made Synanon into little more than a historical curiosity, an object lesson in rehab gone awry, larded with all the now-clichéd excesses of the 1960s and ’70s. Instead, the organization has gone on to function as a perverse sort of model for the ways in which Alcoholics Anonymous’s original approach can be corrupted and misused... ..Here we learn that Clancy Imislund, a famed addiction expert who managed to get celebrities such as Anthony Hopkins clean while operating an LA rehab program for the homeless, is the driving force behind the Pacific Group, also based in Los Angeles and one of the country’s largest AA chapters. Some allege that the Pacific Group has adopted many of Synanon’s former methods, including claims of guru status for “Clancy I.,” sexual exploitation and various forms of behavioral control. Imislund himself seems to be a somewhat of a globetrotter, advising other AA chapters around the country and the world, expanding the presence of the Pacific Group with spin-off meetings and giving countless speeches about personal empowerment and beating the demon of addiction. (Interestingly, when asked about the Midtown Group scandal, Imislund responded in the Washington Post that “there probably have been some excesses, but they have helped more sober alcoholics in Washington than any other group by far”)* (The Fix, 2012).

The “Midtown Group scandal” was reported by the Washington Post in 2007. According to the Washington Post, *“In the Midtown Group, members and outsiders agree, young people could find new friends, constant fellowship, daily meetings, summerlong beach parties, and a charismatic leader who would steer them through sobriety. But according to more than a dozen young people who structured their lives around the group, the unusual adaptation of AA that Michael Quinones created from his home in Bethesda became a confusing blend of comfort and crisis. They described a rigidly insular world of group homes and socializing, in which older men had sex with teenage girls, ties to family and friends were severed or strained, and the most vulnerable of alcoholics, some suffering from emotional problems, were encouraged to stop taking prescribed medications. Kristen, now 26, said that for eight years, she was “passed along” from one middle aged male leader of Midtown to another. She said her sponsor urged her to have sex with Quinones widely known as Mike Q. as a way to solidify her sobriety and spiritual revival... ..After hearing about sexual relationships inside Midtown, Clancy Imislund, managing director of Midnight Mission, a Los Angeles nonprofit group that serves the homeless, said he asked senior Midtown members about the allegations and found that “there probably have been some excesses, but they have helped more sober alcoholics in Washington than any other group by far”* (Washington Post, 2007).

According to an AA member’s experience of so-called A.A. groups associated with Clancy I published in an article entitled *“AA Cults I Have Known”* in *The Fix*, *“A couple of years ago I went to the Atlantic Group in New York. It was springtime, and the moneyed Upper East Side was in full bloom. The AA meeting, known as AG, was holding its anniversary party... ..AG is well known in New York AA. Depending on who’s talking, it either represents “Real Recovery” or an off-putting, overly rigid interpretation of AA doctrine. AG members have strongly worded suggestions about sobriety: You should have a sponsor who has a sponsor who has gone through the 12 Steps with another AG member; when you speak at any AA meeting you should wear a suit and tie or the female equivalent;*

*the use of anti-depressants is discouraged; and the use of profanity is not allowed during qualifications... ...AG began in 1992 as an offshoot of the Pacific Group in Brentwood, California, which was founded by AA legend Clancy I...*

*...Every year, to celebrate their anniversary, AG invites Clancy to speak at their meeting, hence the enormous crowd. On this evening, he told a story very familiar to AAs from the many tapes and conventions he has spoken at over the decades. He was entertaining, pausing for laughs and dramatic punctuation.*

*Midway, he used the word “goddamit.” A young man piped up from the balcony to say, “Excuse me Sir, we have no profanity at this meeting.” It was clear he was attempting a teasing tone. It was also clear he had misjudged the room. The enormous hall froze, not unlike in an abusive household when a child calls out their cruel father.*

*At that moment, as I fiddled with my name tag, I thought it would be a great chance to see long-term, revered sobriety in action. How would the man whose AA tapes had helped me stay sober 20 years earlier gracefully handle this interruption. In the event, there was no empathy for the psychology of the newly sober young man. Instead, Clancy played to the crowd. He expertly waited a few beats of pin-dropping silence, then leaned in to the microphone and said, “Shut up Bitch.”*

*And then, hundreds of sober men and women burst into laughter. Some applauded, as if they were watching Louis CK take down a heckler. The young man turned bright red, and awkwardly raced out of the church. Of the several hundred attendees—many of whom claim to be “recovered” from alcoholism, and that their most important action each day is to “carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers” — not one followed the young man outside. Instead, they turned their attention to Clancy and lapped up the rest of his honed speech, in which he assured the room that their brand of sobriety was more solid, more real and more lasting than any other...*

*...In 1990, I found a meeting on the King’s Road in West London. I sat in the front row, and listened to a young man who announced there was no point in talking about his drinking because it was the program of recovery that mattered... ...Afterwards, an older man approached and introduced himself as David. He asked why I looked so miserable, appointed himself my sponsor and told me that I should stick with his AA group: The Joys of Recovery. He then told me if I did six things every day for 30 days—prayed, called him, read the Big Book etc. — he guaranteed me perfect happiness... ...Later, at more reasonable meetings around London, it transpired that David and the Joys were well known... ...The Joys of Recovery became so shrouded in controversy that they changed their name (A Vision For You, The Big Book Study Group), and have migrated into Detroit and Ireland, though the Irish General Service Office of AA considered that off-shoot to be outside the structure of AA.” (The Fix, 2013).*

## 4.7 Deceptive Distortion of A.A. History regarding A.A.'s relationship with the Oxford Group

According to Freedom Ranch Maui's mission statement "...*Freedom Ranch Maui Incorporated is founded on the premise that the Christian Fellowship of early Alcoholics Anonymous [aka. "Akron Group Number One", led by Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith] provided the model and answer to alcoholism and other addictions through its Christian program developed and utilized between 1935 and 1938...*" (Dick B., 2015b). Dick B, believes that "A.A. is a religion. I think it fair to say that those who claim A.A. is not a religion are probably those who do not want A.A. to be a religion" (Dick B., 2007).

This mission statement, and the premise upon which Dick B's has built his so called "Alcoholics Anonymous" history is deceptive. The selected material that Dick B uses to support his belief does not distinguish between pre-history and history, nor does it differentiate between Oxford Group practices and those of early Alcoholics Anonymous. While the Oxford Group may be called a Christian fellowship, early Alcoholics Anonymous was not a Christian fellowship. This is clearly stated in the forward to the first edition of the 'Big Book' *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published in 1939: "...*We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination...*" (A.A. 'Big Book':xiv). Contrary to Dick B's deceptive reference to "...*Christian pioneers of early Alcoholics Anonymous...*" (Dick B, 2015a), the Alcoholics Anonymous 'Big Book' records these early A.A. pioneers as "...*something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics...*" (A.A. 'Big Book':44). Dick B's assertion that "*Today's people have just changed the language to satisfy the unbelievers. Today's people have just rejected the foundations of A.A. to placate those who want an easier softer way*" (Dick B, 2000:233), does not accord with historical records published by Alcoholics Anonymous and other independent witnesses to A.A.'s foundations. Dr. Silkworth's observation of early Alcoholics Anonymous, published in *Journal Lancet* in 1939, records the following: "*These ex-alcoholic men and women number about one hundred at present. One Group is scattered along the Atlantic seaboard with New York as a center. Another and somewhat larger body is located in the Middle West...The fellowship is entirely indifferent concerning the individual manner of spiritual approach so long as the patient is willing to turn his life and his problems over to the care and direction of his creator. The patient may picture the Deity in any way he likes. No effort whatever is made to convert him to some particular faith or creed. Many creeds are represented among the group and the greatest harmony prevails. It is emphasized that the fellowship is non-sectarian and that the patient is entirely free to follow his own inclination. Not a trace of aggressive evangelism is exhibited...Considering the presence of the religious factor, one might expect to find an unhealthy emotionalism and prejudice. This is not the case, however, on the contrary there is an instant readiness to discard old methods for new ones which produce better results*" (Silkworth, 1939; A.A. World Services Inc., 1957: Appendix E:a).

In 1941, Journalist Jack Alexander published his observations of the early A.A. pioneers in the *Saturday Evening Post*, reporting that "...*He [the newcomer] is asked to believe in a Power that is greater than himself, or at least to keep an open mind on that subject while he goes on with the rest of the program. Any concept of the higher power is acceptable. A sceptic or agnostic may choose to think of his Inner Self, the miracle of growth, a tree, man's wonderment at the physical universe, the structure of the atom, or mere mathematical infinity...*" A.A. World Services Inc., The Jack Alexander Article About A.A.:19).

The A.A. programme developed by the alcoholics between 1935 and 1938 was not a Christian programme. It was developed jointly by alcoholics in New York and Akron, separate to the Oxford Group, initially as a 'word of mouth' programme containing six steps, then twelve. (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:160-167) According to A.A. World Services Inc., "*There is no evidence that the Oxford Group had such a program*" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1984:197). This was confirmed by Dr. Samuel Shoemaker, former leader of the Oxford Group in the USA, and the Rev. T. Hunter, who spent 18 years in full-time staff positions for the Oxford group and M.R.A:

In a letter to Bill W., Dr. Shoemaker, wrote "...*If you ever write the story of A.A.'s early connection with Calvary, I think it ought to be said in all honesty that we were coached in the feeling that you were off on your own spur, trying to do something by yourself, and out of the mainstream of the work. You got your inspiration from those early days, but you didn't get much encouragement from any of us...*"

"*In later years, some A.A. members referred to this procedure as the six steps of the Oxford Group. Reverend T. Hunter, who spent 18 years in full-time staff positions for the Oxford group and M.R.A., said, 'I never once saw or heard anything like the six tenets. It would be impossible to find them in any Oxford Group - M.R.A. literature. I think they must have been written by someone else under some sort of misapprehension*" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1984:206n).

The A.A. programme was not developed solely in Akron, as implied by Freedom Maui's mission statement. Although Dr. Bob led the Akron A.A. group, he stated that "*It wasn't until 1938 that the teachings and efforts and studies that had been going on were crystallized in the form of the Twelve Steps. I didn't write the Twelve Steps. I had nothing to do with the writing of them. But I think I probably had something to do with them indirectly.*" (Dr. Bob, 1948:14). The A.A. Twelve Steps were written by Bill W. in New York. (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:161). He recorded the contributions made by the atheist and agnostic A.A. pioneers in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* and in *AA Grapevine*:

*"...In one of the steps I had even suggested that the newcomer get down on his knees. When this document was shown to our New York meeting the protests were many and loud. Our agnostic friends didn't go at all for the idea of kneeling. Others said we were talking altogether too much about God. And anyhow, why should there be twelve steps when we had done fine on six? Let's keep it simple, they said. This sort of heated discussion went on for days and nights. But out of it all there came a ten-strike for Alcoholics Anonymous. Our agnostic contingent, spearheaded by Hank P. and Jim B., finally convinced us that we must make it easier for people like themselves by using such terms as "a Higher Power" or "God as we understand Him!" Those expressions, as we so well know today, have proved lifesavers for many an alcoholic. They have enabled thousands of us to make a beginning where none could have been made had we left the steps just as I originally wrote them..."* (Bill W., 1953).

*"In Step Two we decided to describe God as a "Power greater than ourselves." In Steps Three and Eleven we inserted the words "God as we understood Him." From Step Seven we deleted the expression "on our knees." And, as a lead-in sentence to all the steps we wrote these words: "Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a Program for Recovery." A.A.'s Twelve Steps were to be suggestions only. Such were the final concessions to those of little or no faith; this was the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics. They had widened the gateway so that all who suffer might pass through, regardless of their belief or lack of belief"* (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:167).

The Akron A.A. group was not founded as an A.A. group until late 1939, the A.A. co-founder Dr. Bob writing to Bill W. in January 1940: "*Have definitely shaken off the shackles of the Oxford Group*" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1980:100,218-219). According to Akron A.A. group 'Old-timer', John S: "*At this time - January - 1940 he wasn't making you get out of bed to pray on your knees, to pray with you, I'm not sure that would have worked too well with me*" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1980:276). This piece of A.A. history was conveniently omitted by fundamentalist authors Joe McQ., Dick B., and sponsees of Clarence S., when they wrote: "*Dr. Bob said "Get down on your knees." And they took step 3..."* (Joe McQ., 2002:26), "*The decision in early A.A. - and today in some cases - involved a surrender made on the knees*" (Dick B., 2000:160). "*Now we take our Third Step Prayer on our knees, just like the Old-timers did. First take a minute read the prayer to yourself. Then, read the following prayer out loud, all together, on your knees*" (Came to Believe Publications, 2005:26).

## Chapter 5

# Recovery Alliance Inc.

The following is a transcript of an A.A. member's experience of recovery from alcoholism and from an A.A. orientated cultic group called the Recovery Alliance Inc., (RAI), published in *"Captive Hearts, Captive Minds: Freedom and Recovery from Cults and Abusive Relationships"* (Tobias, Lalach, 1994).

The transcript may give A.A. members some idea of the structure of a cultic organisation, its fundraising methods, and the type of language used by the organisation for recruit indoctrination and control. Cited earlier in this report was Professor Margaret Thaler Singer's example of the Sirens Song: *"Over the years, cults have shown themselves to be variations on a theme, and their changing use of language is the way that they modernize. But just as some sailors in Greek myth were lured to shipwreck by the Siren's song, so some were saved when Odysseus stopped their ears. We must constantly watch for the new buzzwords that might be used to entice the unsuspecting. We must know when the words that make us yearn to follow someone are a Siren's song"*(Singer, 2003:50).

This is a Siren's song, a variation on a theme, sung by RAI, heard in A.A. Grapevine in 1968, sung by Tom P., Jr., Clarence S., Dick B., Wally P., and James H, Joe McQ, and the Primary Purpose Group of AA, Dallas, Texas: *"RAI practices the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), but claims to do it in a way that is more "pure" than AA and other "Anonymous" fellowships. RAI believes that the 12-step programs have been watered down over the years and no longer practice the true program of recovery as it was intended by its founders."*

*"The Recovery Alliance Inc. (RAI), bills itself as a self-help organization dedicated to the advancement of recovery for what the group refers to as "obsessive-compulsive" persons, such as alcoholics, compulsive eaters, and compulsive gamblers. RAI practices the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), but claims to do it in a way that is more "pure" than AA and other "Anonymous" fellowships. RAI believes that the 12-step programs have been watered down over the years and no longer practice the true program of recovery as it was intended by its founders.*

*RAI is structured as a nonprofit organization, with a board of directors and an organizational charter. Although the board elects a chairman, all the members' activities, beliefs, and direction evolve from the founding member, Donald Gilroy. Gilroy teaches that the "illness" that members are recovering from is centered in selfishness and self-centeredness. To recover, members must commit their lives to selfless self-sacrifice. They are subjected to, among other things, rigorous and tiresome fund-raising schedules, public humiliation, rigidly controlled diets, and other abusive conduct.*

*I wrote the following letter to RAI members two years after leaving the group.*

*March 7, 1992*

*Hi!*

*This week has marked two years since I left the Recovery Alliance, Inc. (RAI). I am writing this letter just to let you know what it's like on this side. I have so much to say that I could go on for pages, but I will try to keep this as brief as possible.*

*I have seen you guys several times – fund-raising, of course. I saw you selling T-shirts in Seattle and raffle tickets at the Durham Fair. I have seen you at car shows, department stores, and at the fireworks. My first reaction*

*when I see you is repulsion, but it is quickly followed by sorrow. I know what it is like for you, since you are all victims (yes victims do exist), just as I was.*

*It is interesting what I am able to see now that I couldn't see then. For as long as I was there I knew that I was unhappy, but I was told that the problem was with my recovery, not my environment.*

*I remember making the decision to leave. It was like all of a sudden being struck with a bolt of sanity. I'm sure you all think it was because I had a boyfriend. Well, I made my decision a couple of months before I met him. After having been placed on probation, I remember standing in my room and thinking, "I can't do this anymore. I want to leave." It was not the first time I had ever had that thought, but this time it was different. This time it was followed by another thought, which was "I don't care what the consequences will be." As you observed, I made no attempt to meet the terms of my probation.*

*When I first left, I was quite confused. Fortunately, I quickly got help from some professionals who have experience with working with former members of RAI and other similarly destructive groups. They helped me see the insanity of the situation. The loss of freethinking. The emotional, sexual, and spiritual abuse we were all suffering. The psychopathology of Donald. I was helped by some books – *Combatting Cult Mind Control* by Steve Hassan and *People of the Lie* by Scot Peck.*

*Well, the consequences of my leaving were nothing like I expected. What am I like today? I'm basically a happy person. I have a good job in my field with a Fortune 500 company. I have a nice apartment (yes, with off street parking) and a decent car. I have a handful of close friends and many acquaintances. Most of my friends are in 12-step programs, but some aren't. I have good relationships with my family.*

*Most of all I have **freedom**. I probably average three AA meetings a week – sometimes more, sometimes less. If I'm tired or just don't feel like going to a meeting, I stay home. Or I go somewhere else. I keep busy, but make time for myself too. I clean my apartment every week. I just finished reading a 1,000 page novel. On weekends I frequently get together with friends and go dancing, hiking, or on day trips. I have dated several guys in the last two years, and have had a couple of steady relationship, too.*

*How's my relationship with God? Fine. I worship the god of my own understanding. I am not overweight, nor am I underweight. I eat two or three meals a day, and sometimes, if I feel like it, I have a snack in between.*

*I am able to express whatever is on my mind, and I don't have to follow any formula. I attend fairs and festivals as a participant, not as a vendor. I attend AA conventions as an AA member, not as a vendor – and not as a person of superior knowledge.*

*Not a Friday has gone by when I haven't come home from a long work week and said to myself, "Thank God I don't have to go to that awful meeting."*

*I feel sorry for other former members who haven't received the help they need. Many of them end up with tremendous guilt as a result of RAI's teachings. Some have joined other destructive groups. One has died. Fortunately, however, most of us have been helped by the proper professionals and have been able to live happy lives.*

*I wish you all the best, and hope that you will soon realize the amount of control and deception taking place in your surroundings.*

*Sincerely,  
Holly"*

(Tobias, Lalich, 1994:8-10; original emphasis)

According to De Leon, "Today, however, TC agencies are complex not-for-profit entities similar to small hospitals or corporations...The organizational structure of the TC treatment program can be depicted as a pyramid representing a stratification of staff and residents. The program staff is confined to the upper level of the pyramid, while the residents at different levels of community seniority and job function represent most of the area downward toward the base." (De Leon, 2000:120). "...TCs typically incorporate fund-raising into their self-help approach, involving residents in these efforts as much as possible. For example, TCs routinely operate a "procurement department," which seeks from individuals and businesses in the larger community donations of everything from furnishings and clothing to sports equipment and electronics. Even foodstuffs, staples, and housewares are sometimes obtained at discounts negotiated with suppliers. Residents may be involved in these procurement efforts through a work assignment. The procurement department operates under staff guidance and utilizes residents to serve on crews for street fund-raising campaigns, pick ups, and delivery of donated goods..."(De Leon, 2000:104).

## Chapter 6

# 12-Step Facilitation, Project Match and Hazelden Foundation

12-Step facilitation was the outcome of “Project Match,” a controversial project carried out by the US government agency, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). According to Dosset, “A much referenced but controversial project in the 1990s in the US, Project MATCH, which compared 12-step facilitation with cognitive behavioural coping skills therapy and motivational enhancement therapy for alcoholism in the largest randomized trial of alcohol addiction treatment ever conducted, claimed to show that spirituality orientated treatment programmes such as 12-step programmes (TSPs) or Alcoholics Anonymous ‘performed at least as well as treatment programs that have no religious or spiritual content’ (Humphreys and Gifford, 2006: 266). The design, reporting and conclusions of MATCH have been criticized (e.g. Cutler and Fishbain, 2005; Peele, 1998), but the project continues to be influential (Babor and Del Boca, 2003; Pagano et al., 2012) (Dosset, 2013:370).

12-Step facilitation began with research carried out by the NIAAA during the 1980s. In 1989, the NIAAA initiated a five year study called “*Matching Alcoholism Treatments to Client Heterogeneity (Project MATCH)*” (NIAAA (1996; NIAAA,1999:x). Project MATCH ran from 1990–1997 (NIAAA, 2015a). According to the NIAAA, “*Project MATCH investigators selected three behavioral treatments that differed markedly in philosophy and practice: 12-step facilitation therapy (based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous but an independent treatment designed to familiarize patients with the AA philosophy and to encourage participation), cognitive-behavioral therapy (based on social learning theory and designed to provide skills for avoiding relapse), and motivational enhancement therapy (based on motivational psychology and designed to help patients mobilize personal resources to effect change). The treatments were selected in part for their distinctiveness and in part because each had demonstrated effectiveness, the potential to reveal matching effects, and the potential to be incorporated into standard alcoholism treatment programs. Many patients in the three treatments also participated in community meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, a mutual support fellowship rather than a formal treatment*” (NIAAA, 1996).

Collaborating with the Hazelden Foundation, and without consultation with Alcoholics Anonymous, the NIAAA published the “*TWELVE STEP FACILITATION THERAPY MANUAL A Clinical Research Guide for Therapists Treating Individuals With Alcohol Abuse and Dependence*” (NIAAA, 1999:iii, xiii). According to the NIAAA, the manual “*Describes twelve step facilitation therapy in which the overall goal is to facilitate patients’ active participation in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. The therapy regards such active involvement as the primary factor responsible for sustained sobriety (“recovery”) and therefore as the desired outcome of participation in this treatment program. This therapy is grounded in the concept of alcoholism as a spiritual and medical disease*” (NIAAA, 2015). “*The therapeutic approach underlying this manual is grounded in the principles and 12 Steps of AA. It is important to note, however, that this manual has no official relationship with or sanction from Alcoholics Anonymous. The fellowship of AA is described in its official literature and is realized through its worldwide meetings. Alcoholics Anonymous does not sponsor or conduct research into alcoholism or its treatment or endorse any treatment program. While intended to be consistent with AA principles, this treatment program is designed for use in a research project. Its goals are to educate clients regarding the AA view of alcoholism and to facilitate their active participation in AA*” (NIAAA, 1999:xii). “*As a treatment based on a 12-Step philosophy had never been standardized in manual form expressly for a clinical trial, the Project MATCH research group turned to the experts. Several personnel at the Hazelden Foundation in Center City, Minnesota—Patricia Owen, Ph.D., Vice-President; Dan Anderson, Ph.D.,*

President Emeritus; and Fred Holmquist, Program Manager—were kind enough to lend us their substantial expertise in this effort. Hazelden staff reviewed two drafts of the *Twelve-Step Facilitation Therapy Manual* and provided thoughtful comments and extensive suggestions, which were incorporated into the manual” (NIAAA, 1999:iii).

Cited earlier in this report, few addiction treatment programmes in the USA have not been influenced by Synanon. Hazelden incorporated the Synanon TC model into its treatment centres in the 1980s. The use of Synanon confrontation is evident in the NIAAA’s *Twelve Step Facilitation Manual*, in order to coerce alcoholics who (quite understandably) do not wish to go to A.A. meetings at this present time:

### **“Confrontation**

*In the context of this program, confrontation is something that therapists can think of as helpful and honest mirroring. The most appropriate form of confrontation is to share frankly but respectfully what you see the patient doing. Most often this involves confronting the patient about some form of denial. Confrontation that is patronizing or harsh or implies that the patient has a character problem as opposed to a powerful and cunning illness is likely to be counterproductive in the long run. The therapist needs to keep the following goal of confrontation in mind: Confrontation is a method for helping patients see their behavior in perspective: as reflecting resistance to accepting the reality of loss of control and unmanageability (Step 1). The following is one example of the preferred mode of confrontation: “What you’re saying is that you can’t find the time to go to a meeting. What I hear is that lots of other things are more important to you than going to a meeting. I see that as denial, meaning some resistance on your part to accepting the fact that you’ve lost control over alcohol. It seems that way to me because if you really accepted your limitation with alcohol and your need to abstain completely from using it, then hardly anything would be more important than getting active in a program that offers you hope. I think you’d find the time to go for treatments, even every day of the week, if you had a potentially terminal illness and if treatment could mean the difference between life and death. That’s the way it is with alcoholism. It’s an illness, it’s chronic and progressive, and it can lead to a premature death. How do you feel about that?” (NIAAA, 1999:15; original emphasis).*

Although 12-step facilitation therapy claims to be “based on the principles of *Alcoholics Anonymous*” (NIAAA, 1996), it appears more to be based on Hazelden’s notion of “AA philosophy.” Much of the philosophy that is expressed in the NIAAA’s *Twelve Step Facilitation Manual* cannot be found in *Alcoholics Anonymous* principles, as they are written in the “*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*,” the “*Twelve Concepts for World Service*” and the first 164 pages of the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. For example, the manual’s advice to the therapist to suggest “*Going to an AA social*” (NIAAA, 1999:8) are not suggested in A.A. principles. Many alcoholics don’t like other alcoholics and certainly wouldn’t want to socialise with them. Social events organised by A.A. members are not considered A.A. events, or part of the A.A. programme (Traditions Three, Four, Six, Concept 12, Warranty Five) (A.A. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*; A.A. *Service Manual*, 2015:71). The Hazelden slogans “*Turn it Over*” and “*Fake It Til You Make It*” (NIAAA, 1999:13,16) are not A.A. slogans. Hazelden books such as “*Things My Sponsor Taught Me*,” by Paul H., Hazelden, Center City, MN Hazelden, 1987, (NIAAA, 1999:9) are not A.A. books. The Oxford Group practice of getting alcoholics to “*surrender*” (NIAAA, 1999:19) is not an *Alcoholics Anonymous* principle. The word “*surrender*” cannot be found in the A.A. *Twelve Steps* as they were written in the first 164 pages of the “Big Book” *Alcoholics Anonymous*, or in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

12-Step Facilitation may have contributed to the rise of fundamentalism in A.A. The overwhelming number of people mandated or referred to A.A. through drug courts and 12-step facilitation appears to have destabilised local A.A. groups in some areas, leading to extensive discussion within A.A. of how local groups could create better links with treatment centres. Fundamentalists reacted by creating their own literature and underground “invitation only” meetings.

According to Travis, “[Conference] delegates wrestled with how to live up to AA’s Responsibility Pledge...as they accommodated a flood of referrals from treatment centers and the criminal justice system. Sheer numbers were part of the problem” (Travis, 2009:172) “...there was extensive discussion of how to create better links between treatment centers and local AA groups, how to model strong sobriety, and how to encourage sponsorship so that people knew what AA was “really” about. Most groups, it seems, improvised responses to the situation as best they could. For some AAs, however, such reactive suggestions fell short of the mark. Traditionalists took it upon themselves to create a literature and culture of their own, one who’s form, content, and distribution methods reiterated the pietist values of the “AA way of life” discussed in chapter two. Their lectures and publications disparaged what they saw as the special interest groups, psychological insights, and commercialism that characterized the therapeutic recovery culture



*of the alcohol and drug industrial complex – a culture, they believed, that despite its nominal commitment to the 12 Steps, threatened to supplant the true “AA way of life” (Travis, 2009:173). “Traditionalist publications provide a way of to resist that entanglement and, according to AA historian Mitchell K., during the 1990s they also helped support the creation of a “growing movement ...[of] ‘underground’ meetings.” As in early midwestern AA, admission to these meetings is carefully controlled: they “are not advertised; and attendance at them is by invitation only. One has to be ‘sponsored’ into them...[and they] are open for alcoholics and their families only.” This rigor, Mitchell K argues, counteracts official AA’s misplaced “desire to help the greater number of people,” which has “led to lower expectations and to diluting of the message to make it more palatable...” (Travis, 2009:180).*

Ironically, the debates in A.A. on how to create better links between local AA groups and treatment centres may have led to A.A. in some localities, to form closer links with Synanon TCs, staffed with confrontational, paraprofessional, A.A. fundamentalists lecturing the so called “original AA”. Just as Gowan and Whetstone’s examination of a TC ‘strong-arm’ rehabilitation facility in a large Midwestern city suggests that “*an increasingly intimate relationship with the criminal justice system may have even reinforced the confrontational and authoritarian characteristics of the original TC*” (Gowan, Whetstone, 2012:74), so “graduates” “facilitated” to A.A. by such TCs may be reinforcing the fundamentalist movement in A.A.

## Chapter 7

# Distortion of early Alcoholics Anonymous History

By drawing upon a very narrow selection of archive material to support their claims, fundamentalists present a deceptive picture of how A.A. was in the 1940s. This section of the report illustrates how this deception can be achieved, by using the Little Rock Group, Arkansas, as an example. According to Travis, “Wally P., has noted that strict “Big Book Thumping” AA cultures came into existence early in Denver and Seattle; Brady S. claims that Little Rock, Arkansas, developed in a similar fashion” (Travis, 2009:135). While this may be true, it does not mean that these local “Big Book Thumping” groups were representative of early A.A. groups as a whole, or that the “success” claims made by these early groups were verifiable, or sustainable.

According to Little Rock group member, Bud G., “It all began in March, 1940, in the mind and heart of a Little Rock (trumpet playing) insurance executive, an alcoholic who had been dry for five years after reading Peabody and practicing an unlabeled brand of A.A. He had had very little success with fellow alcoholics and when he read the first notice of A.A. he sent for the book. He roped in a furniture salesman (without wares) and a broken down (young) newspaperman who had buried himself (for keeps he thought) deep in the oblivion of the State Hospital for Nervous Diseases. . . . One of the charter members drafted a program which, after several overhauls dictated by tryouts, became known as The Little Rock Plan, or the Approach Program. The sole motive behind it was to improve effectiveness of the group’s service to alcoholics. It is a big dose, a rough assignment, highly controversial among groups familiar with it...” (AA Grapevine, 1945). By April 1947, Little Rock had split into four groups (AA Grapevine, 1947a). In August, 1947, Bill W. wrote in AA Grapevine, “...We took special pride in Little Rock, Arkansas, which had sprung up with no personal contact with AA, having caught on through books and letters from the Central Office. Little Rock was the first of the so-called “mail order” groups now commonplace all over the world...” (AA Grapevine, 1947b). In the September 1947 AA Grapevine, the “Little Rock Plan” was revealed in detail by a G.H.B. (AA Grapevine, 1947c).

The following are transcripts from the AA Grapevine Archive, of what early A.A. members thought of G.H.B.’s description of the strict “Big Book Thumping” Little Rock Plan, and its claimed success rate. These articles show a broad cross section of A.A. opinion, from as far afield as Massachusetts, California, Michigan, and Tennessee.

### **“Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home Or Abroad Plus Little Rock**

*So Little Rock prides itself on being tough. . .and obviously the article you published sounded as though they pride themselves more on their slip record than on letting everyone who asks it have a helping hand from A.A. That may be a group of something but it didn’t sound like an A.A. group. . . . They really believe in rules and regulations, don’t they? I wonder who judges out there.*

*E.B.T. Boston, Massachusetts”* (AA Grapevine, November 1947, Vol.4, No. 6)

### **“Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home Or Abroad About Little Rock**

*How can you in the name of A.A. allow such an article as the ‘Little Rock Plan’ be printed in the Grapevine. . . . This sounds more like the police department or probation department plan. There is only one A.A. plan and that is*

right out of the book. No organization. No rules. That's the plan we in Southern California try to follow.  
A.M.

Los Angeles, California" (AA Grapevine, November 1947, Vol.4, No. 6)

**"Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home Or Abroad  
More Little Rock**

*Good grief and little fishes! What have they got out there in Little Rock, Ark. - a concentration camp? It sure doesn't sound like A.A. to me, at least not like anything I ever heard or read about A.A. in the four years I've been in (no slip, either). Where do they get the authority to keep anybody out of the group? Or, rather, where do they get their authority-period! One of the great virtues of A.A. is that it vests authority in no one. Those people, if that's a correct report, just seem to have appropriated it on their own. Imagine bragging about making it tough for anyone to join A.A.! As I read the book, one of our obligations is to get the message to as many as we can, help everyone we can, open the door wide to everyone who knocks.*

H.E.T.

Detroit, Michigan" (AA Grapevine, November 1947, Vol.4, No. 6)

**"Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home Or Abroad  
And Little Rock**

*Around here we were treated to quite a contrast recently. Bill came down here to speak to the regional convention. As always, he was tolerant, understanding, sympathetic-no big shot stuff from him; no expert speaking with authority. No "do's" or "don't's," or "musts." Then I read that thing from Little Rock. Quite a difference between the way they think and the way the founder of A.A. thinks. No wonder that group has only had 500 pass through it in seven years. That's pretty slow growth and quite understandable. They seem more interested in statistics on slips than in practicing A.A.*

T.L.

Memphis, Tennessee" (AA Grapevine, November 1947, Vol.4, No. 6)

It is not known whether all the four groups in Little Rock were using the "Little Rock Plan" in 1947, since it was "*highly controversial among groups familiar with it*" (AA Grapevine, 1945). It is also not known if G.H.B. was able to maintain his sobriety continually in the years to come after 1947.

The Jack Alexander article about A.A. was published in the Saturday Evening Post on March 1, 1941. At the beginning of that year, A.A. membership numbered 2,000. By the end of 1941, membership had jumped to 8,000 as a result of the publicity generated (A.A. Service Manual, 2015:S7). Given that there were around 100 A.A. members in 1939, it can be seen that by the end of 1941, the majority of those 8,000 A.A. members were below one or two year's length of sobriety, with no experience, or traditions to guide them. Many of the local pamphlets and booklets, produced by A.A. members in the 1940s, which are used as propaganda today by fundamentalists, would have been written by alcoholics who were in the early stages of sobriety, and who may have later relapsed or changed their ways of doing things.

The history of A.A. in the 1940s and what happened after publication of the Jack Alexander article is recorded in Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age:

*"In many ways 1941 can be reckoned as the most exiting year in our history. We paid little attention to the low-lying clouds on the horizon which would soon involve us in storms. A.A. was just entering its most fearful and wonderful time of adolescence, a phase which was to last almost fifteen years. The pins on our office wall map showed scores of new groups springing up every week. Sometimes experienced A.A.'s moved away from established centers to make their homes in other cities. Such localities were the lucky ones. But in most cases the newly formed groups had no experienced guidance whatever, except for the A.A. Headquarters. Their worries and problems seemed endless. Committees quarreled, new clubs had unheard-of headaches, orators held forth, groups split wide open. Some members turned professional, selling A.A. therapy for money to new prospects. Sometimes whole groups got drunk, and local public relations went haywire. Such was the beginning of a truly frightening experience that lasted a long time" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:192,193).*

This 1940s history is also recorded in the writings of Bill W. in AA Grapevine, which are now published in 'The Language of the Heart': "*Growth brought headaches; growing pains, we call them now. How serious they seemed then! "Dictators" ran amok; drunks fell on the floor or disturbed the meetings; "steering committees" tried to*

*nominate their friends to succeed them and found to their dismay that even sober drunks could not be steered” (AA Grapevine Inc., 1988:47,48).*

*“From 1940 to 1950, we were beset by group problems of every sort, frightening beyond description. Out of these experiences the Twelve Traditions of AA were forged. . . traditions that now protect us against ourselves and the world outside. This effort, requiring immense office correspondence and experience, finally resulted in a whole new literature dealing with AA’s unity and services. Under these influences we grew solid” (AA Grapevine Inc., 1988:168).*

It is perhaps, testimony to the power of modern thought-reform techniques, implemented through programmes of re-education, that AA Grapevine Inc., could, in 1993, sanction the republication of the “Little Rock Plan” in the book *“The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA,”* as *“Lessons of Experience”* to guide a new generation (AA Grapevine Inc., 2005:66). *Highly controversial* at local and national levels in the 1940s, the plan violated almost all the A.A. Traditions.

With the exception of Clarence S. and his faction in Cleveland, the majority of A.A. pioneers left the fellowship their *Lessons of Experience* in the *“Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions”* and in the *“Twelve Concepts for World Service,”* in hope that the new generations of alcoholics would not need to suffer their same pains:

*“Look at our 12 Points of A.A. Tradition. No random expressions these, based on just casual observation. On the contrary, they represent the sum of our experience as individuals, as groups within A.A. and similarly with our fellows and other organizations in the great fellowship of humanity under God throughout the world. They are entirely suggestive, yet the spirit in which they have been conceived merits their serious, prayerful consideration as the guidepost of A.A. policy for the individual, the group and our various committees, local and national” (Dr. Bob, 1948, Akron, Ohio).*

## Chapter 8

# Corruption of A.A. Sponsorship

This section of the report discusses the corruption of A.A. sponsorship by treatment centres and compares this mistreatment to A.A. sponsorship. The corruption of the A.A. message is illustrated in Joe McQ's "Carry This Message." The language of the TC clearly evident in the following verses:

*"As sponsors we know, there are certain things we require of a sponsoree. . . he has to carry out his assignments and do the things you ask him to do" (page 25). "we are working with an undisciplined person. Assignments should be given, and the sponsor should make it clear to the person that assignments have to be done by a specific time...there are certain things we require of a sponsoree. . . He has to carry out his assignments and do the things you ask him to do. . . But an alcoholic can do just about anything you make her do. If you insist that she do certain things, she'll get them done. She has to go from the undisciplined to the disciplined...At our treatment center, Serenity Park, we require all the clients get a sponsor within the third week...The sponsor teaches discipline...everything is working on this undisciplined person...An undisciplined person may fight discipline, but it has to be enforced to help the person..." (pages, 26, 27). "You can't just say to the sponsoree 'go start on your inventory' because it might take him a month, maybe two. Create a schedule by saying something like, 'We are going to work on resentments for two days' then do the other inventories similarly, with a schedule for each one which doesn't allow the sponsoree to skimp, but moves him or her along at a good pace..." (Step Four assignment). "You need to move your sponsoree along pretty fast...but you need to keep the sponsoree busy and keep her moving...you should just move him right on through them bam, bam, bam, bam. Keep the momentum..." (page 65) (Joe McQ., 2002).*

This book, along with other guides targeted at A.A. members by the addiction treatment industry, which place the A.A. sponsor in an unqualified superior position of a "teacher" "mentor" or "advisor," combined with the teaching of so-called "AA philosophy" or "Big Book philosophy" in 12-Step facilitation and drug court programmes, may well explain why A.A. has become a revolving door like Synanon was years ago. The reasons may be explained in the following: *"A few women voiced dislike of the interpersonal hierarchies at AA/NA. Mary believes that other AA members are reluctant to become involved with people "like us" who are ex-cons (see Terry, 2002). In a similar vein, some women chafe at the AA/NA practice of having a sponsor. During a recent conversation, Josie mentioned that while at the hairdresser's, someone suggested that she go to AA/NA. Josie replied that she has gone in the past but it does not help. This woman then asked her if she had a sponsor and told her that a sponsor is what helps. Josie told her, "I don't want a sponsor. I don't want someone telling me what to do." (Sered, Norton-Hawk, 2011:321). "Early in our relationship, Kalee seemed highly enthusiastic about AA/NA. When asked about the Twelve Steps, she thought she is "maybe on the fourth step," but she was not sure. Still, she said, the meetings are "Very helpful. Absolutely. To listen to other people tell their stories, the support. It's like medicine for me." She went on, "I learn to identify with other addicts instead of comparing myself to them and saying that I'm in better shape," a mixed blessing (one would think) in light of her professed struggles with self-esteem. A year or so after we first met her, after another few cycles of detoxification and relapse, Kalee completed a 9-month rehabilitation program and started a medical assistant course. She wanted to bolster her recovery by attending as many AA/NA meetings as possible. Soon, she began missing classes to attend several daily meetings. She explained to us that the most important thing for her is to work on her recovery, that she needs to stay focused on recovery "because without recovery, school is useless." After several weeks, she stopped going to school entirely and began spending most of her*

day milling around with old friends and other addicts at, before, and after AA/NA meetings. Within a month or so, she was back on the streets and no longer permitted to see her daughter at all. Although Kalee's "relapse" (her word) involved multiple factors, it does seem that her understanding of the AA/NA principle that "recovery has to come first; I can't help anyone else until I help myself" (Kalee's words) — as well as the daily companionship of other addicts - played important roles in her most recent run" (Sered, Norton-Hawk, 2011: 318,319).

According to Joe McQ., "When we finish step 9 we get the promises" (Joe McQ., 1990:123). The A.A. programme does not say this. It may also turn alcoholics away from A.A.: "For most of the study women, the "promises" of AA/NA — "Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us," and "We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it" — are beyond their reach." (Sered Norton-Hawk, 2011:326). Older A.A. members in some areas of Great Britain at least, may remember that prior to 1990 the so-called "Promises" were not ritually read out loud at A.A. meetings. They had no special significance over any other part of the 'Big Book.' These members may also have noticed a trend in recent years, toward introducing ritual reading of other phrases at A.A. meetings. Ritual reading is a feature of the TC. According to De Leon, "A prime example of universal ritual in TCs is the daily recitation of the program philosophy" (De Leon, 2000:90).

In contrast to the above, sponsorship is not a requirement for A.A. membership (Tradition Three). Some A.A. members do not have sponsors, nor do they feel they need one. It can be seen from the previous chapter that for the most part of A.A.'s history, through the 1940s and in some parts of the world today A.A. meetings began with newcomers sponsoring each other. These A.A.'s might have been lucky to find one meeting a week within travelling distance of their homes, yet many were able to use the twelve steps and remained sober. The pressure on newcomers to go to daily meetings and get a sponsor appears to be arising out of the 12-Step facilitation industry. While some wayward, authoritarian strands of A.A. sponsorship emerged in some localities in the 1940s, the A.A. sponsorship that was passed to the fellowship by the A.A. Co-founders, Dr. Bob and Bill W. was an egalitarian relationship. The following are transcripts from A.A. literature:

*"One of the great insights Dr. Bob and I shared was that all true communication must be founded on mutual need. Never could we talk down to anyone, certainly not another alcoholic. We saw that each sponsor would have to admit his own needs, as clearly as those of his prospect. Here was the foundation of A.A.'s Twelfth Step to recovery, the Step in which we carry the message." (Bill W., 1953) "The paradox is that the member of A.A. approaches his suffering alcoholic brother not from the superiority and strength of his position of recovery but from the realization of his own weakness. The member talks to the newcomer not in a spirit of power but in a spirit of humility and weakness. He does not speak of how misguided the still suffering alcoholic is; he speaks of how misguided he once was. He does not sit in judgment of another but in judgment of himself as he had been" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:279). "For example, Drinkers would not take any pressure in any form, excepting from John Barleycorn himself. They always had to be led, not pushed. They would not accept the principle of "team guidance" for their own personal lives. It was too authoritarian for them. In other respects we had to make haste slowly. When first contacted most alcoholics just wanted to find sobriety, nothing else. They clung on to their other defects, letting go only little by little. They simply did not want to get too good too soon" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:74). "I was no longer a teacher or a preacher" (Bill W., 1953). "For example, The Twelve Steps of our AA program are not crammed down anybody's throat. They are not sustained by any human authority" (Bill W., 1948). "It was discovered that all forms of coercion, both direct and indirect, had to be dropped. We found that 'checking' in the hands of amateurs too often resulted in criticism, and that resulted in resentment, which is probably the most serious problem the average alcoholic is troubled with...We can never say to anyone (or insinuate) that he must agree to our formula or be excommunicated. The atheist may stand up in an A.A. meeting denying God, yet reporting how he has been helped in other ways...In order to carry the principle of inclusiveness and tolerance still further, we make no religious requirement of anyone. All people having an alcohol problem who wish to get rid of it and make a happy adjustment to their lives, become A.A. members by simply associating with us. Nothing but sincerity is asked of anyone. In this atmosphere the orthodox, unorthodox, and the unbeliever mix happily and usefully together" (Bill W., 1940). "We do suggest, but we don't discipline. Instead, compliance or noncompliance with any principle of AA is a matter for the conscience of the individual; he is the judge of his own conduct. Those words of old time, "judge not," we observe most literally" (Bill W., 1947).*

*"During nine years in A.A. I have observed that those who follow the Alcoholics Anonymous program with the greatest earnestness and zeal, not only maintain sobriety, but often acquire finer characteristics and attitudes as well. One of these is tolerance. Tolerance expresses itself in a variety of ways: in kindness and consideration toward the man or woman who is just beginning the march along the spiritual path; in the understanding of those who perhaps*

have been less fortunate in educational advantages, and in sympathy toward those whose religious ideas may seem to be at great variance with our own. I am reminded in this connection of the picture of a hub with its radiating spokes. We all start at the outer circumference and approach our destination by one of many routes.

To say that one spoke is much better than all the other spokes is true only in the sense of its being best suited to you as an individual. Human nature is such that without some degree of tolerance, each one of us might be inclined to believe that we have found the best or perhaps the shortest spoke. Without some tolerance we might tend to become a bit smug or superior—which of course is not helpful to the person we are trying to help, and may be quite painful or obnoxious to others. No one of us wishes to do anything which might act as a deterrent to the advancement of another—and a patronizing attitude can readily slow up this process.

Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered-to opinions. In other words it often promotes an open-mindedness which is vastly important—in fact a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual. These, then, are a few of the reasons why an attempt to acquire tolerance should be made by each one of us” (Dr. Bob, 1944, Akron).

“...Yet, withal, there are no ”shibboleths” in A.A. We are not bound by the thongs of theological doctrine. None of us may be excommunicated and cast into outer darkness. For we are many minds in our organization and an A.A. decalogue in the language of “Thou shalt not” would gall us indeed... We have found it wise policy, too, to hold to no glorification of the individual. Obviously, that is sound.... We’ve all seen the new member who stays sober for a time, largely through sponsor-worship. Then maybe the sponsor gets drunk and you know what usually happens. Left without a human prop, the new member gets drunk too. He has been glorifying an individual instead of following the Program...In as large an organization as ours, we naturally have had our share of those who fail to measure up to certain obvious standards of conduct. They have included schemers for personal gain, petty swindlers and confidence men, crooks of various kinds and other human fallibles. Relatively their number has been small, much smaller than in many religious and social uplift organizations. Yet they have been a problem and not an easy one. They have caused many an A.A. to stop thinking and working constructively for a time...” (Dr. Bob, 1948, Akron, Ohio).

The cult-like behaviour of certain groups associated with the fundamentalist Big Book Study movement have been the source of reports of disunity in some areas of the fellowship in Great Britain. According to the Service Handbook for Ireland, approved by the Alcoholics Anonymous General Conference, Ireland, the “*Big Book Study Movement is outside the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland*” (A.A. General Service Conference, Ireland).

Ironically, as Synanon’s founder Charles Dederich discovered, “tough-love” treatment is very “successful” in generating a loyal following and a generous income, albeit limited and unsustainable in the long term.

It is therefore, perhaps, testimony to the power of modern thought-reform techniques delivered in the form of programmes of re-education, that despite all that was written by the A.A. co-founders Bill W., and Dr. Bob, the words “tough-love” have entered into A.A. Conference Approved Literature in Great Britain - perhaps the first time ever in Alcoholics Anonymous history. According to the pamphlet ‘Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered,’ “*While firm sponsorship (tough love) usually works well in convincing a newcomer, most AAs recognise that firmness overdone can upset a newcomer. It needs to be tempered with understanding.*” - According to Bill W: “*It was discovered that all forms of coercion, both direct and indirect, had to be dropped*” (Bill W., 1940).

## Chapter 9

# Commercial Corruption of Alcoholics Anonymous

### 9.1 Loss of AA's Circle and Triangle Trademark

During the 1980s and 1990s there was an increasing, and at times, illegal, commercial pressure on A.A. by novelty manufacturers, publishers and treatment facilities, which ultimately led to A.A. in the U.S.A. 'letting go' of its Circle and Triangle Trade mark in order to avoid the suggestion of association or affiliation with outside goods and services. The external commercial pressure on A.A. was combined with an internal political lobby in support of the illegal misuse of the trademark. The loss of the trademark was reported in the GSO newsletter, Box-4-5-9, August/September, 1993 issue, as follows:

#### ***“Letting Go’ of the Circle and Triangle As A Legal Mark***

*A triangle, enclosed within a circle, has long been recognized as one symbol of Alcoholics Anonymous. Yet, both the triangle and the circle are among the earliest spiritual signs known to man. To ancient Egyptians, the triangle was a sign of creative intellect; to the Greeks, it meant wisdom. In general, it represents an upward yearning after higher knowledge or spiritual realm.*

*At the International Convention celebrating AA.'s 20th anniversary, a circle enclosing a triangle was accepted as the symbol of Alcoholics Anonymous. “The circle,” Bill told the A.A.s gathered in St. Louis, “stands for the whole world of A.A., and the triangle stands for A.A.'s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service. Within our wonderful new world, we have found freedom from our fatal obsession...”*

*The symbol was registered as an official A.A. mark in 1955, and was freely used by various A.A. entities, which worked very well for a while. However, by the mid-1980s, there was a growing concern by the members of the Fellowship on the use of the circle and triangle by outside organizations. In keeping with A.A.'s Sixth Tradition, that Alcoholics Anonymous “...ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise...”, A.A. World Services began efforts in 1986 to prevent the use of the circle and triangle by outside entities, including novelty manufacturers, publishers and treatment facilities. The policy was undertaken with restraint, and only after all attempts at persuasion and conciliation had failed were legal actions considered. In fact, of approximately 170 unauthorized users contacted, only two suits were filed, both of which were settled at a very early stage.*

*By early 1990, some members of the Fellowship seemed to be saying two things: “we want medallions with our circle and triangle,” while others were saying, “we don't want our symbol aligned with non A.A. purposes.” The desire of some A.A. members for anniversary chips was addressed by the A.A. World Services and Grapevine Boards in October 1990, when they considered the possibility of producing medallions. The boards felt that tokens and medallions were unrelated to our primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message, and that the matter should be given a thorough airing at the Conference in order to seek a group conscience from the Fellowship. The essence of this decision was relayed to the 1991 General Service Conference in the A.A.W.S. Board's report.*

*The 1992 General Service Conference began to confront the dilemma by hearing presentations on why we should or should not produce medallions, and the responsibility of A.A.W.S. to protect our trademarks and copyrights from uses that might suggest affiliation with outside sources. The result was a Conference Advisory Action for the General*



*Service Board to undertake a feasibility study on the possible method by which sobriety chips might be made available to the Fellowship, followed by a report to an ad hoc. committee of 1993 Conference delegates.*

*Following lengthy considerations, the ad hoc committee presented their report and recommendations to the 1993 Conference. After discussion, the Conference approved two of five recommendations that: 1) the use of sobriety chips/medallions is a matter of local autonomy and not one on which the Conference should record a definite position; and 2) it is not appropriate for A.A. World Services or the Grapevine to produce or license the production of sobriety chips/medallions.*

*Among the considerations in the ad hoc committee's report were the implications of continuing to protect A.A.'s trademarks from use by outside organizations through legal means.*

*Coincidentally, the A.A.W.S. Board had begun to consider recent developments, culminating in recognition that the prospects of increasingly costly and lengthy litigation, the uncertainty of success, and the diversions from A.A.'s primary purpose were too great to justify continuing the protection effort of the circle and triangle. During the post-Conference meeting of the General Service Board, the trustees accepted A.A.W.S.'s recommendation to discontinue protecting the circle and triangle symbol as one of our registered marks.*

*By early June, the General Service Board reached substantial unanimity in support of A.A.W.S.'s statement that, consistent with our original purpose to avoid the suggestion of association or affiliation with outside goods and services, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc. will phase out the "official" or "legal" use of the circle and triangle symbol. A.A.W.S. will continue to resist unauthorized use of our other marks and any attempts to publish A.A. literature without permission.*

*The triangle within a circle will, of course, always have a special meaning in the hearts and minds of A.A.s, in a symbolic sense, just as do the Serenity Prayer and slogans, which have never had any official status."*

The Loss of the Circle and Triangle trademark was also reported by AA Grapevine in December 1993, Vol. 50 No. 7, under the title "Whatever Happened to the Circle and Triangle?"

The celebration of anniversaries by some A.A. members dates back to the 1940s. The 'chip system' is thought to have been introduced by a Doherty S. in Indianapolis in 1942 (A.A. World services Inc., 2008:4). This was a period in A.A. history when "*Committees quarreled, new clubs had unheard-of headaches, orators held forth, groups split wide open. Some members turned professional, selling A.A. therapy for money to new prospects. Sometimes whole groups got drunk, and local public relations went haywire*" (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:192,193). While present day novelty manufacturers and advocates of chips and medallions, may point to their long history as propaganda to justify their use in A.A. meetings, it may also be considered that disunity has also had a long history in A.A., where individuals and groups failed to actively endorse A.A. Traditions. Sometimes an attempt is made to justify the use of medallions by referring to Sister Ignatia's gesture of giving a St. Christopher medallion (or maybe pendant, since she was a Roman Catholic Nun), to alcoholic patients treated at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron. There is no evidence to suggest that she was profiteering by selling them by the box load to the Akron A.A. Group. It appears from the 1993 GSO newsletter that the proliferation of mass produced medallions, illegally marked with the A.A. Circle and Triangle did not become a concern in A.A. until the mid-1980s.

The celebration of "birthdays" was a characteristic of Synanon philosophy (Casriel, 1963:63,72; Yablonski 1967:79,101): "*On Saturday nights, Synanon holds open house. These get together have become so popular in Santa Monica that reservations must be made in order to get in – and made early in the week, at that. Chuck presides as something of a master of ceremonies, narrating the week's events and introducing members who are celebrating their Synanon "birthdays". The room is noisy with music, singing, laughter, and discussion. It is an atmosphere full of family warmth, opening people's hearts and minds*" (Casriel, 1963:72). Celebration is also characteristic of the TC: "*There are many occasions marked for celebration in the TC. Such community events are used as positive symbols of individual and collective change. TCs usually celebrate, ethnic, national and local holidays...individual markers (birthdays, anniversaries), recovery landmarks (treatment phase changes, program and school graduations), and specific program events..*" (De Leon, 2000:90).

The celebratory atmosphere of the TC and some A.A. meetings today contrasts sharply with the sober atmosphere of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings led by the A.A. co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob. The first secretary of the A.A. General Service Office in New York, Ruth Hoc, recalled the atmosphere of A.A. meetings led by Bill W: "*At that time, we did not go into Step work. Didn't have 90-days requirements. No birthdays – no recognition was made if you were sober a week or a year, If you felt you would like to speak in a year or in a month or two weeks they let you get up and speak, and they didn't throw you out if you were drunk, either. They felt it was encouraging, hoping*

*some word would stick*” (A.A. World Services Inc., 1984:219). Akron A.A. pioneer, Bob E., recalled the atmosphere of Akron meetings led by Dr. Bob: “*There was no levity in the beginning...We all had our sense of humor, but for us, recovery was a life or death matter. Nor was there any clapping. At that kind of meeting, applause would have seemed out of place*” (A.A. World Services Inc. 1980:220). Akron A.A. pioneer Norman Y. recalled Dr. Bob saying “*Don’t applaud me. Don’t applaud any alcoholic*” (A.A. World Services Inc., 1980:221). “*Through the mid-1940s, it was felt that grand titles and flowery introductions might go to an alcoholic’s head*” (A.A. World Services Inc., 1980:220).

## 9.2 Commercial Corruption in A.A. Intergroups

The commercial corruption in A.A. intergroups is evident in online shops which retail novelty products and books manufactured by outside enterprises. Salt River Intergroup Inc., Houston Intergroup Association Inc., Portland Area Intergroup Inc, Akron Area Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous, Baltimore Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous, New Hampshire Area Assembly of Alcoholics Anonymous; Alcoholics Anonymous, London, Ontario, Canada, are a few examples. It unlikely to be known how many A.A. groups have abandoned Traditions and gone into the ‘recovery merchandise’ business.

Akron Area Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous: ‘shop’ <https://shop.akronaa.org/>



Figure 9.1: Novelty circle and triangle coin, price \$2.25, Akron Intergroup online shop [https://shop.akronaa.org/index.php?main\\_page=index&cPath=7&zenid=5dbee07d4b9e56d1813eac87b4e6892e](https://shop.akronaa.org/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=7&zenid=5dbee07d4b9e56d1813eac87b4e6892e)



Figure 9.2: Novelty “3” black and white sticker,” price \$1.00, Akron Intergroup online shop [https://shop.akronaa.org/index.php?main\\_page=index&cPath=3&zenid=5dbee07d4b9e56d1813eac87b4e6892e](https://shop.akronaa.org/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=3&zenid=5dbee07d4b9e56d1813eac87b4e6892e)

Houston Intergroup Association Inc: 'store' <http://www.aahouston.info/>



Figure 9.3: Novelty "Pink Bling Chip", \$18.00, Houston Intergroup Store <http://www.aahouston.info/searchresults.asp?cat=1841>

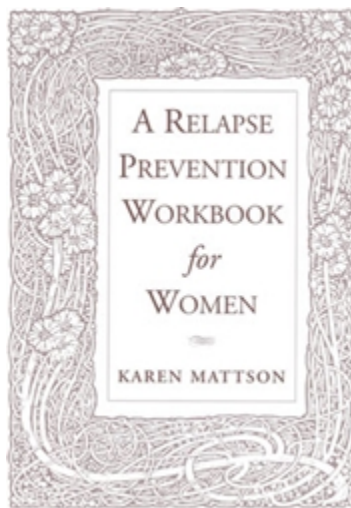


Figure 9.4: "A Relapse Workbook for Women" \$4.95, Houston Intergroup Store <http://www.aahouston.info/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=3227>

*"A Relapse Prevention Workbook for Women is designed for any woman who has stopped using alcohol or other drugs and would like to remain sober/drug-free. It can be used in any stage of recovery—early, middle, or late. This workbook is intended for self-use and is small enough to keep with you for easy reference. Counselors may use assignments from this workbook as a basis for discussion in group or individual counseling sessions"* (Houston Intergroup Store).

Portland Area Intergroup Inc: 'store' <http://www.pdxaastore.com/>



Figure 9.5: "Walnut medallion holder with "One Day At A Time" laser engraved" \$14.00 Portland Intergroup Inc. Store <http://www.pdxaastore.com/>

Salt River Intergroup Inc: 'Central Office Store'

"Other recovery literature - select Hazelden books, A New Pair of Glasses by Chuck C." <http://aaphoenix.org/central-office/store/>

Baltimore Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous: 'Literature info and Store' <http://www.baltimoreaa.org/BICAA/litstore7.php>

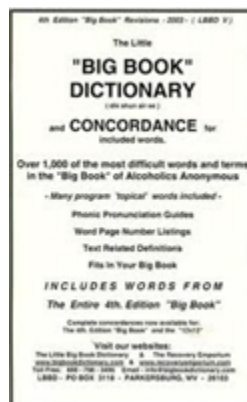


Figure 9.6: "Big Book Dictionary...Includes words from the entire 4th Edition "Big Book" \$4.50, Baltimor Intergroup Inc. Literature Info and Store <http://store.baltimoreaa.org/category-s/1818.htm>



*First Things First*

Figure 9.7: “*First things First Bumper sticker*” \$1.50, New Hampshire Area Assembly Store <http://nhaa.net/product-category/stickers/>

Alcoholics Anonymous London, Ontario, Canada: ‘*On-Line Ordering for AA, Al-Anon, Alateen & Hazlestone (sic) Books, Literature, Pamphlets etc.*’ <http://www.aalondon.org/>

“*Hazelden Literate (sic) Various Book Covers Recovery (sic) Emporium and Faith with Works Publishing*”  
“*Various Items Jewelry, (sic) Medallions, Keychains, Pins and Gift Items. Photographs and Local Printed Items*  
<http://www.aalondon.org/X1-aa-alcoholics-anonymous-al-anon-alateen-ACOA-hazelden-books-literature-pamphlet-order-online.html>

According to White, “*Posters, Medallions, key chains, bookmarks, bracelets, pins, stationary, and bumper stickers all constitute art forms. These objects which portray the symbols, slogans, and phrases of recovery from addiction constitute the folk art of the culture of recovery. By procuring and portraying such folk art, recovering people signal to themselves and the outside world their transformation in identity. The explosion in availability of folk art from the culture of recovery provides great opportunities for treatment programs to incorporate art as a support in client recovery ... It is somewhat surprising given the population explosion within the culture of recovery that more traditional art forms, such as painting and sculpture, have not emerged to depict and celebrate the experience of recovery ... Literature, like other cultural media, can be an influencing agent supporting the values congruent with either addiction or recovery ... This proliferation of writing about addiction and recovery offers new opportunities and a new technology available to treatment programs*” (White, 1996:324,325).

### 9.3 Illegal reprinting of A.A. Literature in ‘Big Book Study Guides’

The following are extracts from a policy statement made by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc. entitled “Big Book Study Guides Reviewing a Position Paper”: “*In 1977, faced with a rising number of requests from non-A.A. sources and some A.A. members to reprint portions of the Big Book and other material in study guides, the directors of A.A. World Services, Inc. took a hard look at the subject and appointed a committee to explore the question. Members of the committee unanimously recommended that the board not grant permission to outside entities to use excerpts from our literature in study guides, and that A.A. itself should not publish study guides... For example, one director wrote: “Part of the beauty and magic of A.A. is that persons from all walks of life with varied backgrounds may benefit from the Big Book, the Steps, the Traditions, the Concepts, from their own points of view. Placing guidelines on paper seems to say, “This is the way — the only way.”... Another director felt this way: “My knowledge of recovery has been received in the Fellowship through the experience of one drunk sharing with another drunk and it was not received on an instructive basis or in a classroom atmosphere. I believe that we in A.A. communicate with each other in a language of the heart, and this type of communication would be extremely difficult with the use of study guide... Finally, Tradition Two tells me we have but one ultimate authority — a loving God as he expresses himself in our group conscience. It seems to me if we allow interpretations of the Big Book through study guides, we will also undermine our ultimate authority.” The final policy statement reads as follows: “The A.A. World Services Board of Directors feels strongly that permission should not be granted to outside publishers or other parties to reprint A.A. literature for the purpose of study guides or interpretive or explanatory texts, etc. If such interpretive or study guides are to be prepared, they should be published by A.A. World Services, Inc...” (A.A. World Services Inc., 1977/2005).*

Despite the policy statement made by A.A. World Services Inc. outside entities continue to illegally reprint copyright A.A. literature in Big Book Study Guides and interpretive or explanatory texts. Not only this, but they deceive the purchasers of this material by giving false acknowledgements that they have received permission: “*The author and the editors are grateful to the following for their contributions to this book... Alcoholics World Services Inc., for permission to use the Steps*” (Joe McQ., 1990). “*The excerpts from Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (A.A. W.S.)*” (Joe McQ., 2002). “*We gratefully acknowledge permission granted by Alcoholics World Services, Inc. to quote from Conference Approved publications with source attributions*” (Wally P., 1997/2001). “*In this chapter and elsewhere in our book, The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc.*” (Dick B., 2000: 147). “*The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that AA has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication, nor that AA agrees with the views expressed herein*” (Covington, 2009a).

## 9.4 Hazelden Publishing

Hazelden’s contribution to the rise of the fundamentalist movement in A.A. has a long history:

According to Travis “*Hazelden began in 1949 as a “sanatorium for curable alcoholics of the professional class,” founded and administered by a group of wealthy businessmen and industrialists who had tried AA after a variety of failed attempts to get sober. From the outset, Hazelden was strongly committed to AA’s version of the disease concept and the antidote of surrender: it treated alcoholism as a primary, progressive illness, and advocated a cure that addressed mind, body, and spirit, with an emphasis on the latter. Though it had a strong collaborative relationship with the state psychiatric hospital in Wilmar, up until the early 1960s the Hazelden treatment protocol, stated simply, was “intense indoctrination into the AA program.” A physician oversaw acute detoxification and provided shots of vitamin B12, but recovering alcoholics handled almost all other aspects of patient care, providing lectures on the Steps and Traditions, running AA meetings, and arranging structured work and recreation. There was no “counseling;” instead the program stressed the rigorous AA fellowship common in the Midwest – early and heartfelt surrender to a Higher Power along with the mutual support to be found in “one alcoholic talking to another over a cup of coffee”* (Travis, 2009:149,150).

“*When the alcoholism treatment industry began to evolve rapidly in the 1960s, Hazelden changed along with it. Increasingly, attention was paid to dual addictions and “comorbidity” (alcoholism in conjunction with mental illness), gradually moving toward understanding alcoholism within a broad spectrum of “chemical dependencies”* (Travis 2009:150). “*The bulk of Hazelden’s activities were still concentrated in its Rehabilitation Division, where the work of sobering up alcoholics and other addicts took place. But it also embarked on an educational mission, establishing in 1965 a Pastoral Training Program that instructed clergy in how to recognize and support alcoholics and addicts; a more broad-based counselor training program followed in 1966. In response to these changes, the focus of Hazelden’s treatment regimen shifted from a “pure AA” orientation to a “multidisciplinary” one, which drew on the insights of “physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and clergy” as well as “counselors who were recovered alcoholics”* (Travis, 2009:150).

“*The expansion and enrichment of its treatment protocols served Hazelden well. By 1970, 11,000 patients had been admitted at the Center City facility, and more had been treated at what had become a handful of satellite programs established in nearby St. Paul. The multidisciplinary “Minnesota Model,” with its attention to organic, psychological, and spiritual causes and manifestations of addiction, was becoming the norm within the industry, and treatment professionals flocked to Hazelden to study its workings like “pilgrim[s] going to Mecca.” The Stated mission throughout this period remained “How can we best help the most alcoholics?” Nevertheless, during the 1960s several longtime members of AA who had formed the backbone of the rehabilitation staff departed in disgust, disillusioned at what they considered the betrayal...and the abandonment of AA principles on behalf of psychology.” Those that remained redoubled their commitment to Hazelden’s version of AA tradition. This tension between what AA historian Damian McElrath calls “orthodox versus unorthodox philosophy” – between individuals committed to a simple, personal, and AA based approach to addiction treatment and those invested in a dynamic, multifaceted, and expansive approach – would ultimately reshape Hazelden’s literary culture” (Travis, 2009:151).*

“*The professionalization that had occurred in Hazelden’s Rehabilitation Division in the early 1960s rippled*

through other parts of the organization a few years later; in 1967 the publishing and distributing Department was formally incorporated under the Business Division of the center and began to produce original titles (Travis, 2009:152). “Between 1972 and 1974, the publishing staff jumped from three people to eighteen; it spun off into its own division – known as Educational Materials – in 1975. In that year the catalogue – which had been in 1969 a mere three-page folded leaflet offering thirty-three books and fifty-nine pamphlets for sale – ballooned into an illustrated fifty-page booklet, offering hundreds of print and audio titles, not only for addicts and treatment professionals, but also for family members affected by addiction” (Travis, 2009:152).

“These changes to Hazelden’s literary offerings mirrored shifts in its rehabilitation regime; McElrath describes AA as “alive but not well” within the treatment center at this time. Increasingly, it seemed, “using the Big Book during treatment and referrals to AA as the essential part of an aftercare plan” took a back seat to new therapeutic insights. As a result, the stalwarts of AA “orthodoxy” who remained on the staff and on the board grew more concerned about what they perceived as a drift away from what the 5th Tradition described as AA’s “primary purpose.” Their unhappiness manifested in anxiety about literary production, and in 1972 a Literature Advisory Committee was founded to ensure that they adhered to the spirit, if not the letter, of 12-Step philosophy. Sympathetic old-timers employed throughout the publishing and distribution operation worked to ensure compliance with the Literature Advisory Committee, and their opinions carried great weight. One such individual Jack V., was described by a colleague as having “almost more power than the Executive Vice-President for Publishing.”

A combination of formal and informal mechanisms, then, ensured that Hazelden’s publications, especially for professionals, did not stray too far from 12-Step philosophy. Writings on anything other than alcohol or drug addictions were frowned upon, as were “Norman Vincent Peale-type [texts and other ‘power within’ thinkers,” whose books were deemed “unsuitable” for recovering addicts. Books intended for recovering people, furthermore, were uniformly designed to reflect the values of traditionalist AA culture. They were to resemble prayer books, to be able to be hidden in a pocket, and to be cheap.” The fragile balance of power between those committed to a “pure AA” Hazelden and those with a more expansive, multidimensional, and professionalized vision of the institution shifted in the late 1970s with the rise of prominence of Jack Swift” (Travis, 2009:152-153).

“A firm believer in the use of books and reading in addiction treatment, Swift moved early in his tenure as COO to secure the Big Book reading’s central place within Hazelden’s treatment regimes. But his allegiance to the big book did not necessarily make him a proponent of AA’s ideal of intensive and “religious” reading. From his position as COO, Swift had a birds-eye view of the entire Hazelden operation, and he saw the new Educational Materials Division as a key area for growth. “Bibliotherapy” was not yet widespread in the addiction industry, but Swift believed Hazelden’s counselor training program could make it happen” (Travis, 2009:154).

“The Hazelden mail-order edition of Codependent No More sold 76,000 copies in its first year, then jumped into the stratosphere in 1987 when the Harper/Hazelden edition appeared, with sales of over 3000,000. In 1989, Hazelden entered into a licensing agreement with mass-market publisher Ballantine, the better to allow its “mission to reach the broadest possible base...in drugstores, groceries, and discount outlets”. By 1990, Beattie’s book had spent more than two years on the New York Times best-seller list, with sales of over 4 million. A 1989 follow-up volume, *Beyond Codependency*, debuted on the Times list and stayed there for more than twenty weeks. At the peak of her popularity in 1990, Harper San Francisco had around 100 Hazelden titles under license, but Beattie’s two volumes alone generated more than half of Harper Hazelden’s revenue of \$9 million. The same year the Educational Materials Division grossed over \$27 million in annual sales. Revenues from publishing were so extensive, according to Harry Swift, that he worried that the IRS might seek to revoke Hazelden’s status as a not-for-profit corporation.

Selling this hybrid version of recovery – the 12 Steps in combination with other, more familiar American ideas about the self, the causes of suffering, and means to happiness – to people who were not themselves addicts or even closely connected to addicts turned out to be a good business decision for Hazelden. In 1991 the bottom fell out of the addiction treatment industry as managed care began to dry up insurance payments to residential treatment programs” (Travis, 2009:170,171).

“By the middle of the decade, the Educational Materials Division had become accustomed to thinking of itself as a revenue-generating part of the Hazelden enterprise. It became increasingly professionalized with an internal literature distribution center, a subsidiary rights department, profits and loss statements on individual titles, and a system of executive bonuses. That new corporate mindset placed a premium on finding new markets and developing new product lines to meet their needs” (Travis, 2009:171).

“Members of Hazelden’s conservative old guard that had objected to “an AA book for women” lingered on the treatment side of Hazelden, continuing to voice their “suspicion and mistrust” of the Educational Materials Division through the 1990s. While their complaints occurred during and were related to the expansion and diversification

of Hazelden and of alcoholism treatment generally, it was important to establish that they were not explicitly complaining about opening up 12-Step culture to broader and more diverse populations. Rather, traditionalists objected to what they perceived as the dilution of AA spirituality by therapeutic ideas, and to the conscious marketing of and profiteering from the transformative gift of the 12-Step ideals. Though Hazelden remained a non-profit organization, its professionalization – emblemized in the evolution of Educational Materials into a full-fledged recovery communications circuit integrated into the larger circuit of commercial trade publishing- meant that it was no longer a privileged adjunct to the anti-market community of A.A. Administrators’ attempts to return it to that status were half-hearted, and in any case, futile.” (Travis, 2009:172).

The Little Red Book and Twenty-Four Hours a Day, important devotionals to fundamentalist movement, are both published by Hazelden. The Little Red Book, was written by an Ed W. and Barry C., and widely circulated in A.A. in the 1940s in the form of a series of lecture notes. This was before A.A. developed standardised literature for unity and service. It did not get approval from GSO (Travis, 2009:137,145). Although claims are made by the book’s promoters that Dr. Bob supposedly endorsed The Little Red Book, these contradict his comment on “*special interpretations*” published in A.A. Grapevine in 1948, in which Dr. Bob wrote “*Much has been written, much has been said about the 12 Steps of A.A... ...As finally expressed and offered, they are simple in language, plain in meaning. They are also workable by any person having a sincere desire to obtain and keep sobriety. The results are the proof. Their simplicity and workability are such that no special interpretations, certainly no reservations, have ever been necessary*” (Dr. Bob, 1948, Akron, Ohio).

The Little Red Book was published by Hazelden in 1957. ‘Twenty-Four Hours a Day,’ is a daily devotional written by a Richmond Walker, who was a wealthy industrialist from Boston, who joined the Oxford Group in 1939 and came into A.A. in 1942. Walker attempted to have his self-published book A.A. Conference Approved, but it was declined in 1954. Less than two weeks after Walker had received notification from New York, Hazelden made an offer to publish the book and Walker agreed (Travis, 2009:149). Today Hazelden is a distributor Wally P’s “*Back to Basics Beginners Meetings*”: “*Be transformed–again–with Wally P’s Back to Basics. If you’re new to AA, have just become a new sponsor, or simply want to reinvigorate your recovery program, Back to Basics will guide you through the Twelve Steps anew. Based on the content and flow of the earliest AA Beginners’ Meetings in the 1940s, this guide conducts you through the Twelve Steps in four one-hour sessions*” (Hazelden, 2015a).

After collaborating with the NIAAA, to publish the “Twelve Step Facilitation Manual” without “*official relationship with or sanction from Alcoholics Anonymous*” (NIAAA, 1999:iii, vii, xiii) Hazelden has since published “A Woman’s Way Through the Twelve Steps” (Covington, 2009a) and “A Woman’s Way Through the Twelve Steps Facilitator Guide,” currently available as a pack containing 10 workbooks for \$195.00 (Covington, 2009; Hazelden 2015b). It is ironic that since A.A. World Services Inc. does not grant permission to outside publishers to reprint A.A. literature for the purpose of “*study guides, interpretive or explanatory texts, etc.,*” (A.A. World services Inc., 1977/2005), and that the editor’s note in “A Woman’s Way Through the Twelve Steps” states that “*The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.*” (Covington, 2009), that the Facilitator’s guide should then make a point of saying that “*Alcoholics Anonymous, AA, and the Big Book are registered trademarks of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc*” and that “*Duplicating this page is illegal. Do not copy this material without written permission from the publisher*” at the bottom of each page of the guide. (Covington, 2009).

## 9.5 Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing

By the mid-1980s A.A. income from sales of literature was exceeding publication costs. According to the General Service Board, “*In 1986, the General Service Board asked for a special effort to inform the Fellowship of the dangers inherent in this situation; particularly that a substantial fraction of the publishing was, at that time, derived from outside sources. The effort was begun to inform the groups about the growing problem. The challenge was to make G.S.O.’s service work self-supporting through contributions of the membership and to sell literature at cost to everyone*” (A.A. Service Manual, 2007:S72).

Although selling A.A. literature at cost price to everyone may have solved the fellowship’s problem with adhering to Tradition Seven, it has not solved the problem of outside organisations profiteering from A.A. literature, nor has it solved the problem of the association or affiliation of the name Alcoholics Anonymous with other goods and services. For example, supplying A.A. literature to TC treatment facilities which combine Synanon TC treatment



with the Alcoholics Anonymous programme, such as those cited in earlier sections of this report, may reinforce an impression of A.A. being affiliated with abusive programmes in the eyes of recipients of the abuse and in the eyes of the general public.

As to the question of outside organisations profiteering from A.A: Is it right that still suffering alcoholics, or anyone else for that matter, pay more for A.A. literature which is sold at a profit by treatment centres and other distributors than they would if they bought it at cost price from G.S.O., or an A.A. group? For example, ever since A.A. has supplied Hazelden with A.A. literature, Hazelden has sold this on at a marked-up price: “...it nevertheless served as an important distributor of 12-Step literature, purchasing books and pamphlets from the AA GSO and reselling them at a small mark-up and in plain unmarked wrappers – via direct mail” (Travis, 2009:151). At the time of writing, the price of a 4th ed. hardcover Big Book was \$9.50, and the hardcover Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, \$8.50, when ordered online from the GSO New York website, sold without any question of association/affiliation with other products (A.A. World Services Inc., 2015). The online price of the 4th ed. hardcover Big Book from Hazelden was \$12.95, and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions hardcover was \$12.95., both sold in association with other products (Hazelden, 2015c, 2015d). Hazelden’s mark-up was around 36% for the Big Book and 52% for the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Amazon.com, was retailing the 4th ed. hard cover Big Book at between \$14.69 and \$29.99 new, with around 500 used from \$0.80. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions was retailing at \$14.81 new, with around 427 used, from \$0.01, both sold in association with other non A.A. published products.

There was a time when A.A. was its own publisher and distributor, via G.S.O, the service structure and the A.A. groups. Perhaps now might be the time to consider this once again? Some 35 million Big Books have been put into circulation (A.A. World Services Inc., 2015:3). Only around 2 million owners are now members of A.A. This suggests a Big Book without the Language of the Heart is much like a lighter without a flame.

## 9.6 Commercial Corruption in A.A. General Service Conferences and General Service Boards

AA Grapevine Inc. appears to have evolved into a commercial publisher with the publication of numerous new books, facsimiles, and other items including gift certificates, wall calendars and pocket planners ( AA Grapevine Online Store, 2016). This may give some sceptics of A.A. justifiable impression that AA Grapevine Inc. has departed from its intended purpose and is now primarily about making money.

Perhaps USA/Canada Conference Delegates and the AA Grapevine Board of Directors have forgotten the spirit of A.A. Traditions and Concept XI, which reads: “...Unlike a commercial publisher, we do not have to ensure the selection, writing and publication of a lot of new books each year. Most of our A.A. books are already written, and it is possible that not many more will be published...” (A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service 2016-2018 Edition:52).

According to the advert for the 2017 Wall Calendar “The quotes aren’t directly related to either AA or alcoholism, so the calendar may be displayed anonymously” (AA Grapevine Online Store, 2016). The 2017 Pocket Planner is “A companion to the Wall Calendar, the Planner (annual) features a month at a glance spread and quotations from the Calendar. Great for keeping anniversary dates.”

In Great Britain, The ‘Fellowship Calendar & Diary 2016’ had sold out by February (A.A. Great Britain, 2016).

## 9.7 A.A., the Internet and Online Therapeutic Communities

*“A vast communications net now covers the earth, even to its remotest reaches. Granting all its huge public benefits, this limitless world forum is nevertheless a hunting ground for all those who would seek money, acclaim and power at the expense of society in general. Here the forces of good and evil are locked in struggle. All that is shoddy and destructive contests all that is best.*

*Therefore nothing can matter more to the future welfare of AA than the manner in which we use this colossus of communication. Used unselfishly and well, the results can surpass our present imagination. Should we handle this great instrument badly, we shall be shattered by the ego demands of our own people - often with the best of intention on their part.”* –Bill W., 1960. (The Language of the Heart:319-320)

In recent decades, Alcoholics Anonymous has provided members with Conference approved Internet guidelines. These guidelines have been developed through an extensive process of consultation with A.A. groups and communicated throughout the fellowship to General Service Conferences via elected representatives. These guidelines represent the majority opinion in the A.A. group conscience and therefore express the ultimate authority in Tradition Two. The following are extracts from guidelines for Great Britain and USA/Canada: *“It should be noted that the only websites which can be truly called AA websites are those which are endorsed by an official AA service body, i.e. intergroup, region or country”* (A.A. Service Handbook, Great Britain, 2013:35). *“To preserve Alcoholics Anonymous’ trademarks and service marks, website committees are asked to avoid using the marks “A.A.,” “Alcoholics Anonymous,” and/or “The Big Book” in their domain names... ...Just like regular A.A. meetings, online A.A. meetings are autonomous. Due to the lack of a central geographic location, online A.A. meetings are not a direct part of the U.S./Canada service structure”* (A.A. Guidelines, Internet - MG-18, U.S./Canada).

Numerous online meetings and online A.A. member clubs have formed independently outside the A.A. service structure in recent decades. In addition to these, numerous A.A. related Recovery Communities/Therapeutic Communities have also established themselves online, some claiming to be online A.A. meetings. Some A.A. members’ online clubs, in accordance with A.A. Traditions, make no claim to be A.A. meetings and clearly state they are not affiliated to A.A., whilst others claim to be A.A. meetings. A.A. related interactive communities number thousands (Kitchin, 2002:751). Some sites which affiliate themselves to Alcoholics Anonymous may have been created by A.A. members with good intent. There are, however, sites operated by organisations to which A.A. is not allied, which illegally misuse A.A. trademarks, deceptively confusing their organisations with Alcoholics Anonymous. Some so-called online A.A. meetings appear to be fronts for commercial enterprise. Some contain members who are not alcoholics, whilst others publicly solicit funds on behalf of A.A. Research on online A.A. meetings published in Contemporary Drug Problems in 2002 observed various violations of A.A. Traditions within the A.A. related cyber community, including the breaking of anonymity at the public level and *“non-alcoholics telling alcoholics how to get sober”* (Kitchin, 2002:754).

Any non-alcoholic person or outside organisation can set up an Internet forum and name it an online A.A. meeting. It can only be assumed that those operating such sites are A.A. members – they might not be and how could anyone tell? The Internet is being used by various individuals, fundamentalist and extremist groups and other organisations which use sophisticated mind controlling techniques in order to manipulate and recruit the unsuspecting (Hassan, 2013:220). If A.A. is to protect vulnerable members from exploitation, if A.A. is to maintain its integrity and avoid public controversy by being confused with other organisations, then the fellowship will need to address the problem of confusion between those Internet sites which are operated by Alcoholics Anonymous and those sites which are operated by individuals and other organisations under the A.A. name. The present ambiguity in Internet guidelines which imply that such independent Internet sites may indirectly be part of A.A. will need clarification according to A.A. Traditions and General Warranties of Conference; specifically Concept 12, Warranty Five. It may be noted that according to Tradition Four and contrary to the U.S./Canada guideline, *“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole”* - and not “autonomous” as stated in the guideline.

The number of so-called online A.A. meetings operated by recovery communities and commercial enterprises or individual affiliates thereof, is unknown. It would be difficult, if not impossible to differentiate between online A.A. meetings and counterfeit online A.A. meetings operated by other organisations. The various formats of webcam, audio, chat or email meetings are similar. Some sites operated by other organisations or affiliates thereof, are more obvious than others. In the Rooms, Recovery World LLC and Back to Basics Beginners meetings described below, provide just three examples. Where sites publicly solicit money for the support of their online A.A. meetings in the name of Tradition Seven, there is potential for misappropriation of A.A. funds and exploitation of donors. Recovery World LLC’s public appeal for its online meetings which accepts Bank/Credit card transfers with the statement: *“Give a buck button. Please help us grow and cover costs of servers, host and technical help”* may mislead some donors who contribute to support Recovery World’s online A.A. meetings into believing that they are donating to online to A.A. meetings. The situation may be summed up by the following words of Bill W:

*“Conservative AAs realize that business ventures or solicitations carrying the AA endorsement are truly dangerous to us all. Were this practice to become general, the lid would be off. Promoters, AA and otherwise would have a field day”* - Bill W., 1947 (The Language of the Heart:55). *“...we must discourage our members and our friends in these*

*fields from stressing the A.A. name in their publicity or appeals for funds. To act otherwise will certainly imperil our unity, and to maintain our unity is surely our greatest obligation – to our brother alcoholics and the public at large. Experience, we think, has already made these principles self-evident” -Bill W., 1947 (The Language of the Heart:43-44).*

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc. endorses Recovery World’s online A.A. meetings by providing a link on its website to the Online Intergroup, Alcoholics Anonymous, (O.I.A.A.) (aa.org, 2016), of which Recovery World’s online A.A. meetings are a constituent group (O.I.A.A., 2016). G.S.O., New York also indirectly endorses Recovery World’s online A.A. meetings in the Box 4-5-9 News and Notes from G.S.O. (Box 4-5-9, 2015). Whilst Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc. might try to evade responsibility for its website links by stating that ‘*Linking to another website does not constitute an endorsement by A.A. World Services, Inc.*’ the reality is that such links do give an actual or implied endorsement.

The Online Intergroup, Alcoholics Anonymous was registered as non-profit corporation on February 24, 1996. Although it claims to maintain “*a registered office and registered agent in the state of New Jersey*” no postal address for the office is given on its website (O.I.A.A., 2016a). According to G.S.O. “*Excited about today’s expanding ability to reach out to suffering alcoholics, A.A. members around the world continue finding new ways to carry A.A.’s message of hope. One helpful development in this effort has been the growth of the Online Intergroup of A.A. (O.I.A.A.), an organization nearing its 20th anniversary. First formed to help unify the growing number of online meetings that began to mushroom in the late 1980s, many starting as bulletin board meetings and email groups, the O.I.A.A. was legally incorporated in 1996, giving online groups a forum for exchanging information and ideas and for helping one another carry the message of A.A. online.*” (A.A. Box 4-5-9, 2015:7-8).

Some A.A. members do not accept independent online forums to be A.A. groups or meetings whilst others appear to embrace them without question. Some may question whether it is in the best interest of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole for A.A. World Services Inc. to provide links to websites which are not directly part of the A.A. service structure. They may also question whether it is in the best interest of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole for A.A. World Services Inc. and G.S.O. to promote organisations which attempt to unify independent online groups some of which contain non-alcoholic members and are affiliated to other organisations. This situation may cause contention within the fellowship regarding A.A. Traditions. A study of the AA cyber community in 2002 found that: “*The AA cyber-community is interesting in that members can be found here participating in methods of subversion of an organization that normally is important to their everyday functioning. While discourse may transmit, produce, and reinforce power, its reversal may undermine, expose, and render power fragile (Foucault, 1979). Of importance here, though many AA affiliates continue to transmit and reinforce the power of the AA discourse, there are now AA members engaged in reversing conventional AA discourse, thereby perhaps rendering that discourse vulnerable. It will be interesting to watch over time CMC’s [Computer-mediated communication’s] influence over AA philosophy and, in turn, what role, if any, cyberspace will play in shifting individual belief systems within AA. That is, will CMC subversion harm AA over time? To this point, one member asserts: “Any harm coming from or to AA will probably come from the ‘inside”’ (Kitchin, 2002:770-771).*

Some independent A.A. members’ forums already voluntarily identify themselves as online clubs in accordance with A.A. Traditions, making no claim to be A.A. meetings and clearly state they are not affiliated to A.A. An example of such an online club is Soberfolk.org, described below. A logical progression of Internet guidelines which could satisfy most A.A. members and also help to protect A.A. from being drawn into public controversy through confusion with other organisations is to use past experience in A.A. Traditions to create a clear boundary by designating independent online meetings as online clubs.

The examples of counterfeit online A.A. meetings provided below which are operated by other organisations or affiliates thereof illustrate how the Internet is being used to exploit Alcoholics Anonymous. They may serve some A.A. members with a reminder of their responsibilities in Concept Twelve, Warranty Five, of which the following are extracts “*... We may be confronted by public violations of the A.A. Traditions. Individuals, outside organizations, and even our own members sometimes may try to use the A.A. name for their own private purposes. As A.A. grows in size and public recognition, the temptation to misuse our name may increase... ...Privately however, we can inform Tradition-violators that they are out of order. When they persist, we can follow up by using such other resources as we may have, and these are often considerable... ...Whenever and however we can, we shall need to inform the general public also; especially upon misuses of the name Alcoholics Anonymous, This combination of counter forces can be very discouraging to violators or would-be violators. Under these conditions they soon find their deviations to be unprofitable and unwise” (A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, 2015:68-69).*

It may be considered that had a significant number of A.A. members in the USA and Canada upheld this warranty in 1993, regarding the illegal misuse of the Circle and Triangle trademark, A.A. might have retained this trademark instead of letting go of it. Today the name Alcoholics Anonymous is under the same threat from illegal misuse by globally spread and powerful multinational corporations. How well this A.A. generation is willing, and able, to gain a global perspective and cooperate throughout the A.A. world service structure to uphold Warranty Five across international boundaries may well determine the difference between A.A.'s future integration or disintegration as a fellowship. The protection of the A.A. name by discouraging its misuse will require a concerted, simultaneous and combined action throughout the service structure, worldwide; at all levels, from individuals in A.A. groups, through to Intergroups, Areas, Regions, G.S.O.s, Conference Delegates and General Service Boards.

In The Rooms, partnered with Faces and Voices for Recovery (Social Networking Watch, 2009), was founded in 2008 by Ronald Tannebaum and Ken Pomerance (recoveryanswers.org, 2015; Social Networking Watch, 2009). In a contradictory statement on its website, In The Rooms claims that *“In The Rooms is not associated with Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous however our site is home to the largest AA and NA online community in the world”* (In The Rooms, 2016a). In The Rooms claims to provide “Alcoholics Anonymous Live Meetings” “AA Video meetings” “Powered by In The Rooms®” (In The Rooms, 2016a, 2016b). Alcoholics Anonymous® and A.A.® are registered trademarks of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A. Service Manual, 2015:S77). They cannot legitimately be lent to any related facility or outside enterprise ( Traditions 6, 4, 2; Concept 12, Warranty Five). Neither can they legitimately be permitted to be “borrowed” or stolen by A.A. members for their personal use or by outside organisations (Concept 12, Warranty Five). The “Live Meetings” for alcoholics provided by In The Rooms® could be labelled “In The Rooms® Alcoholics Live Meetings”, but they cannot legally be labelled “Alcoholics Anonymous Live meetings.” Doing so infringes the Alcoholics Anonymous® trademark. Not only does this misleading labelling confuse In The Rooms® meetings with Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, it is also illegal.

Recovery World LLC, founded in 1994, is a commercial enterprise and social network which serves the Recovery Community (Recovery World, 2016, 2016a). Recovery World LLC operates what it claims to be Alcoholics Anonymous “Chat & Email Meetings” on its website, <http://www.recovery-world.com/> (Recovery World, 2016,2016a). These Recovery World meetings are also a constituent of the Online Intergroup, Alcoholics Anonymous (O.I.A.A., 2016). Recovery World LLC supplies a wide range of novelty products including Book covers, Bill W. bobbleheads, Medallion holders, God Boxes, Recovery jewellery, Medallion holder boxes, Wallet cards, Book marks, ‘Joe and Charlie’ and ‘Father Martin’ DVDs and CDs. (Recovery World, 2016b, 2016c). According to Recovery World LLC, *“Recovery World, LLC is owned and operated by Dewan (nephew of the departed John Stockton) and wife Susan Thornberry (friends of Bill W.) and at times some of their six children”* (Recovery World, 2016).



Figure 9.8: Recovery World LLC ‘Bill W. Bobblehead’  
(Recovery World 2016c)

The Back to Basics Foundation Inc. Therapeutic Community has been described in Section 4.5. Affiliates of

Back to Basics operate as a constituent of the Online Intergroup, listed with the following description: “*Back to Basics Beginners Meeting ‘This is a closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, for Alcoholics only. Using the Big Book and the Back to Basics Beginners Meeting Book, we share our experience, strength, and hope with each other to help others to recover from alcoholism’*” (O.I.A.A., 2016b). The meeting’s site directs viewers to its group website, <http://aabacktobasics.org/> but not any A.A. websites such as A.A. World Services. (Back to Basics beginners Email Group, 2016).

Soberfolk.org provides an example of an A.A. related online club, stating that “*Soberfolk.Org is an online clubhouse for A.A. members, but is no way connected to A.A.*” (soberfolk.org, 2016a), and “*almost all of the current members of this clubhouse are members of AA*” (soberfolk.org, 2016). Although claims made on independent A.A. related websites concerning their online meeting/club membership cannot be independently verified, by identifying itself as an A.A. members’ club, rather than an A.A. group or meeting, the site separates itself from Alcoholics Anonymous. Similar to online A.A. meetings Soberfolk.org offers webcam, audio and chat meetings. Some so-called A.A. online meetings such as those described above and clubs may be fronts for other organisations which use contact through online meetings as a means to direct alcoholics to various A.A. related recovery literature, merchandise and fundamentalist groups.

Soberfolk.org Circle and Triangle logo merchandise can be purchased online in the UK from Café Press (Café Press co.uk, 2016g). Soberfolk.org customers are given the following welcome to the store: “*Welcome to the Soberfolk store! Thanks to CafePress.com, I am now selling a number of products with the soberfolk.org logo on them. Please feel free to browse my store and buy anything you like!*” (Café Press co.uk, 2016g).

Café Press markets a wide range of products on its UK website under ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’ categories (Café Press co.uk, 2016b), a few examples are shown below. Whilst A.A. has ‘let go’ of its Circle and Triangle trademark in the USA and Canada, due to pressure of illegal misuse by other organisations, Alcoholics Anonymous and A.A. remain A.A. registered trademarks. It is illegal for other organisations such as Café Press to market their wares under Alcoholics Anonymous trademarks or to print these trademarks on their merchandise without permission. Alcoholics Anonymous would not grant such permission according to Tradition Six and Concept Twelve, Warranty Five. As A.A. members, and as citizens in society, every A.A. member is at liberty to inform those who illegally misuse A.A. registered trademarks and to inform the general public of such illegal misuse. Moreover, it is their responsibility to do so, “*Whenever and however we can*” (A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, 2015:69). Café Press co.uk is a retail outlet of Café Press Inc., a worldwide multinational operation with global headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, USA (Café Press.co.uk, 2016b; Café Press Inc., 2016a).



Figure 9.9: Café Press Soberfolk.org logo Magenta Classic Thong £10.50  
[http://www.cafepress.co.uk/+soberfolk\\_magenta\\_classic\\_thong,313349393](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/+soberfolk_magenta_classic_thong,313349393)



Figure 9.10: Café Press 'Alcoholics Anonymous Black T-Shirt' £19.00

[http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey\\_tshirt?productId=59033408](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey_tshirt?productId=59033408)



Figure 9.11: Café Press Soberfolk.org logo T-Shirt £19.00

[http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/30531137/soberfolk-white\\_tshirt?productId=313355488](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/30531137/soberfolk-white_tshirt?productId=313355488)



Figure 9.12: Café Press Alcoholics Anonymous International Convention T-Shirt' £13.50

[http:](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/96456165/2015-a-a-international-convention_tshirt?productId=1493738061)

[//www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/96456165/2015-a-a-international-convention\\_tshirt?productId=1493738061](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/96456165/2015-a-a-international-convention_tshirt?productId=1493738061)



Figure 9.13: Café Press Alcoholics Anonymous Hoodie £35.00

[http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey\\_tshirt?productId=59033408](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey_tshirt?productId=59033408)



Figure 9.14: Café Press 'Alcoholics Anonymous Women's basic T-Shirt' £13.50  
[http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey\\_tshirt?productId=59033422](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey_tshirt?productId=59033422)



Figure 9.15: Café Press 'Alcoholics Anonymous Jumper Hoody Pullover' £31.00  
[http://www.cafepress.co.uk/+alcoholics\\_anonymous\\_jr\\_hoodie,59033401](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/+alcoholics_anonymous_jr_hoodie,59033401)





Figure 9.16: Café Press ‘Alcoholics Anonymous Ash Grey Long Sleeve Dark T-Shirt’ £23.50  
[http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey\\_tshirt?productId=59033408](http://www.cafepress.co.uk/mf/12684792/alcoholics-anonymous-ash-grey_tshirt?productId=59033408)

Soberfolk.org published literature includes a “Big Book 12 Step guide”, a version of the so called “*original, undiluted 12 step program*” (Soberfolk.org Big Book 12 Step Study Guide:3), similar to those published by the fundamentalist Back to Basics and Primary Purpose programmes described earlier in Chapter Four. The Soberfolk.org guide claims to be based on “*the Big Book Sponsorship – Big Book Step guide*” (Soberfolk.org Big Book 12 Step Study Guide:33). According to Soberfolk.org, “*We connect suffering alcoholics to recovered alcoholics who guide newcomers through a personalized one on one study of the original, undiluted 12 step program... ...This format can be conducted in one half day or four one hour sessions*” (Soberfolk.org Big Book 12 Step Study Guide:3).

The guide deceptively distorts A.A. history in a similar fashion to those described earlier in Section 4.7 and Chapter Seven. In this case, the distortion presented by Soberfolk.org is based upon the recollections of “*Ruth R. an old-timer in Miami, Florida, who [it is claimed] came to A.A. in 1953*” (Soberfolk.org Big Book 12 Step Study Guide:2). According to ‘Ruth’ “*Beginners Classes*” [with an implied 50-75% success rate] were “*discontinued as a result of the publication of the book ‘Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions’ by Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing Inc. In the Miami area, the ‘Twelve and Twelve’ replaced both the ‘Big Book’ and the ‘Little Red Book’ [a treatment centre publication] and ‘Step Studies’ replaced the ‘Beginners Classes.’*” A.A.’s Step Four became “*a much more laborious and detailed process*” (Soberfolk.org Big Book 12 Step Study Guide:2).

Only A.A. members resident in the Miami area could verify if ‘Ruth’ does indeed exist, what her business interests are, and observe the state of her mental health. It is well recorded in A.A. published history that A.A.’s main growth period occurred after the publication of the ‘Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.’ ‘Ruth’ would have no recollection of what the majority of A.A. meetings were like A.A. prior to 1953, because she evidently did not attend them until 1953. It is of course in the interest of those who would exploit A.A. financially or otherwise, to sell today’s A.A. members a twisted history that undermines A.A. Traditions - this does open the door to their exploitation.

The format of the guide (illustrated below), representing a programme of re-education of A.A. history, followed by an incitement of A.A. members to apply subtle coercive pressure on newcomers by distracting their minds with lots of questions, whilst simultaneously committing them to sign statements when they may be in a vulnerable state of mind and unable to think things through properly for themselves, may be considered to be a programme of thought reform or brainwashing. A similar technique is used by the fundamentalist Back to Basics/ Primary Purpose movements described in Chapter Four. An online Primary Purpose Group is a constituent of the Online Intergroup, Alcoholics Anonymous. According to the group’s description in the O.I.A.A. directory, “*We have elected to use the Big Book Study Guide prepared by members of the Primary Purpose Group of Dallas, to help us stay focused on the study of the Big Book. There are one or more questions for virtually every sentence in the Basic Text. This is not a discussion meeting so please keep your comments to the question being studied*” (O.I.A.A., 2016c).

While some alcoholics may conform to such treatment and intrusive interrogation, the experience of A.A. history records that most will not – especially not when it comes from another alcoholic. Sooner or later, they will hit the

bottle or find an alternative to what they have been misled to think is A.A. Some may think A.A. is a cult and go public with their views.

Staff at G.S.O., New York and A.A. World Services Inc. may do well to consider all the above and where their implied endorsements and website links will eventually lead some vulnerable A.A. members and newcomers.

They may also consider where these implied endorsements and links will lead non-alcoholic researchers and the general public.

*"We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of a drowning person."* (p. 28) **[Are you desperate – yes/no?]**

*"Then... ask [the newcomer] if they want to quit for good and if they would go to any extreme to do so."* (p. 90)

**[Are you willing to thoroughly follow the Big Book instructions – yes/no?]**

*"If they say yes, then their attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered."* (p. 90)

If the answer is "YES, I am willing to do ANYTHING", then **you are ready to proceed?**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am willing to go to any lengths to recover from my alcoholism.

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

### **Self-Diagnosis**

*"Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. **[Is this your experience – yes/no?]***

*The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious **[Is it injurious to you – yes/no?]**, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once*



## Chapter 10

# Diseasing of America: How We Allowed Recovery Zealots and the Treatment Industry to Convince US We Are Out of Control

### 10.1 Introduction

Some A.A. members may be aware of public criticism of A.A. at the level of national press, the Internet, and in various books by professionals. Debate revolves around AA's effectiveness as a treatment and whether A.A. is a cult. This section of the report examines a few of the recent social trends in A.A., the controversy surrounding the medical classification of addiction as a disease, and the misuse of Alcoholics Anonymous as an addiction treatment. The criticism of A.A. appears to be focussed on the commercial, institutionalised '12-Step philosophy' 'Big Book philosophy' type of A.A. found in treatment facilities, the recovery movement, and in groups which adopt such treatment philosophy. The introduction of the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) into the US health care system may warrant some attention from A.A. members regarding how they approach newcomers with Twelve Step work and how they conduct A.A. public relations, since the World Health Organisation does not classify alcoholism as a disease.

### 10.2 Public Criticism of A.A.

According to Peele, *"For some time AA was a private fellowship of like-minded people who sought an understanding of what they regarded as their special drinking problem. This movement however, was co-opted by its own success and by its integration into mainstream medicine and psychotherapy. By the 1970s, AA had become the model for treatment groups and a linchpin in the provision of services for drinking problems in the United States. At the same time, the National Council on Alcoholism (the public-relations arm of the AA movement) convinced Americans that there are millions of unrecognized and unacknowledged alcoholics who require immediate medical and group treatment. As treatment for drugs and alcohol moved away from the self-help concept that AA originally endorsed, it became more coercive..."* (Peele, 1995:24).

*"Although alcoholism is billed as an incurable disease we are told that there is effective medical treatment for it. Private treatment centers claim remarkable remission rates of 70, 80, and 90 percent. Meanwhile, Father Martin, the lecturing alcoholic priest, calls AA a "modern miracle," and one often hears claims that everyone who seriously embarks on an AA program will become sober. Along with television specials about the treatability of alcoholism, we now have a popular feature length film, Clean and Sober, that trumpets the success and importance – the essentialness – of getting treated for drug abuse"* (Peele, 1995:73.)

Father Martin®'s 12-Step lectures are available to view on youtube.com. Father Martin® and Father Martin's

Ashley® are registered trademarks of Ashely Inc., owners of Father Martin Media and Father Martin's Ashley® a drug and alcohol treatment facility recently renamed Ashley Addiction Treatment in 2016 (Father Martin Media, 2016, 2016a; The Fix, 2016). In 2006, the NHS National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse published the *“Review of the effectiveness of treatment for alcohol problems”* covering the published international research literature on alcohol interventions and treatment. It found that *“Education (tapes, lectures or films)”* ranked the least effective form of treatment, ranking 48th out of 48 treatments. Twelve Step Facilitation ranked 37th, and Alcoholics Anonymous, 38th (NHS, 2006:44). For A.A. members who may wish to improve A.A.'s effectiveness, the chapter *There Is a Solution*, in the 'Big Book' reads: *“...no attitude of Holier Than Thou...no lectures to be endured - these are the conditions we found most effective”* (A.A. 'Big Book':18,19).



Figure 10.1: FatherMartin®logo (Hazelden Publishing,2016)

According to Bufe, *“Thanks largely to the 12 traditions, communal AA is a model of anarchist organization. All AA groups are autonomous. [See note below] There is no hierarchy giving orders to members, and it is very clear that the relatively few paid staffers are there to “serve,” not to rule. Significantly, the structure of A.A. is often pictured as an inverted pyramid, with the members on top and the paid staff at the bottom. The situation is different in institutional A.A. There, almost all entities are corporations or government agencies, which, of course, are hierarchically organized and authoritarian in nature, with some giving orders and others taking them. In institutional A.A., the staffers are there to rule (i.e., to force clients to accept AA and its premises), not to serve; they hold a great deal of power over their coerced clients”* (Bufe, 1998:149).

Note: A.A. Tradition Four states: *“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”*

According to Kaminer, *“The religiosity of the recovery movement is evident in its rhetorical appeals to a higher power and in the evangelical fervour of its disciples. When I criticize the movement I am usually accused of being “in denial,” as I might once have been accused of heresy. (There are only two states of being in the world of codependency – recovery and denial.) People who belong to twelve step groups and identify strongly as addicts often turn on me with the self-righteous rage of religious zealots defending their gods. Yet I have no power over them and want none. I’m not questioning their freedom to indulge in any religion or self-help movement. I’m not marketing a competing movement or exhorting them to do anything in particular with their lives. If they’re happy in recovery, why do they resent and take personally the scepticism of strangers?”* (Kaminer, 1992:3).

*“The speakers, celebrities on the recovery circuit, are all quite slick, and it’s clear that they’ve given their talks many times: they speak fluently for an hour without notes. The audience is starry-eyed, nodding and murmuring throughout. In nearly three days of lectures and workshops, I am the only person to question or challenge an expert. I always take them by surprise, and the audience is always irritated with me. So while the experts routinely disclaim expertise (they often say they are experts only about themselves), they seem to expect their authority never to be questioned, and it virtually never is. The experts hold forth, for a fee, and the audience receives, at a cost. Yet one of the selling points of the recovery movement is its aggressively egalitarian posture; in keeping with AA tradition from which it grew, this is supposed to be a leaderless movement of equals. There is no fuhrer – no Werner Erhard, No Reverend Moon, no L. Ron Hubbard. Some experts, like John Bradshaw, are better known and more widely read than others, but the recovery movement is not centered around a single expert any more than Hollywood revolves around a single star”* (Kaminer, 1992:99).

The recovery movement might be centred around a single expert. Sometimes, something that cannot easily be seen requires a little imagination and good natured exploration before it can be uncovered. Scientists call this method of exploration “research and theory.” Imagine that the stars in the recovery movement can be likened to the stars in a galaxy. Scientists think the active centre of many galaxies is a black hole, a massive star which collapsed at the end of its life cycle. The gravitational force of this star is so great that even light cannot escape it, so it cannot be seen. Gravity is described as a “natural phenomenon by which all things attract one another.” Matter in these galaxies revolves around the black hole, held in place by the black hole’s gravitational field: Stars, stellar remnants, interstellar gas, dust, and dark matter. The stars are gravitationally organised into associations known as galaxy groups. Now imagine that the stars in the recovery movement may be revolving around a single star: This star is named Charles E. Dederich III, a massive star who collapsed at the end of his life cycle and became a black hole. In this recovery galaxy, the force by which all things attract one another other is called charisma. The stars are charismatically organised into associations known as recovery communities, or recovery groups. Apparently, no single star can be seen in control of this galaxy, yet it functions as a movement with certain aims. Each cluster of small stars within this galaxy are arranged in a pyramid of organisation. The charismatic force of a large, single star at the top of each pyramid holds the smaller stars in place within its charismatic field. All stars have their free will, yet this will is automatically compliant to the system – a system of interacting forces between the stars, and the clusters around them, and with the force of the black hole which is the active centre of the galaxy. Such is the power of a massive, single, invisible, black star: ‘Big Brother.’ Dederich once said “*I am Big Brother, I am Big Daddy, I am all kinds of things...*” (Synanon Short Film; Morantz, 2015:426). And so he may be. His spirit lives on, the active centre of a paradigm which now spans addiction treatment, the criminal justice system, education, and Alcoholics Anonymous. According to Janzen, “*One of Synanon’s most important legacies is the international therapeutic – communities (TC) movement. Member organizations not only employ many Synanon people but operate according to basic Synanon practices, including peer counseling, status ladders, confrontational group processing, voluntary enrolment, and at least minimal residential requirements. Unlike Synanon, however, TCs sometimes employ professional psychiatrists and social workers, and many accept government dollars and oversight. Chuck once described TCs as “branches of Synanon Foundation Inc.” And he predicted an “amalgamation” that might not occur until after his death*” (Janzen, 2001:242). According to White, Synanon was a “*milestone*” in the organisation of the recovery movement, also described as the “*Culture of Recovery*”, a “*loosely organized confederation of tribes or social networks, that nurture and support recovering addicts*” (White, 1996:233,225).

The social structure of the Synanon cult developed in four phases (Ofshe 1980): 1. Voluntary Association: January-September, 1958; 2. Therapeutic Community: 1958-1968; 3. Social Movement and Alternative Society: 1969-1975. 4. Religion: 1975-1991. In theory, another phase of development could be added: 4. Paradigm: Addiction treatment, criminal justice system, education, Alcoholics Anonymous, 1968-present.

The following flow chart shows the evolution of Synanon TC programmes until 2006, published by journalist Maia Szalavitz:

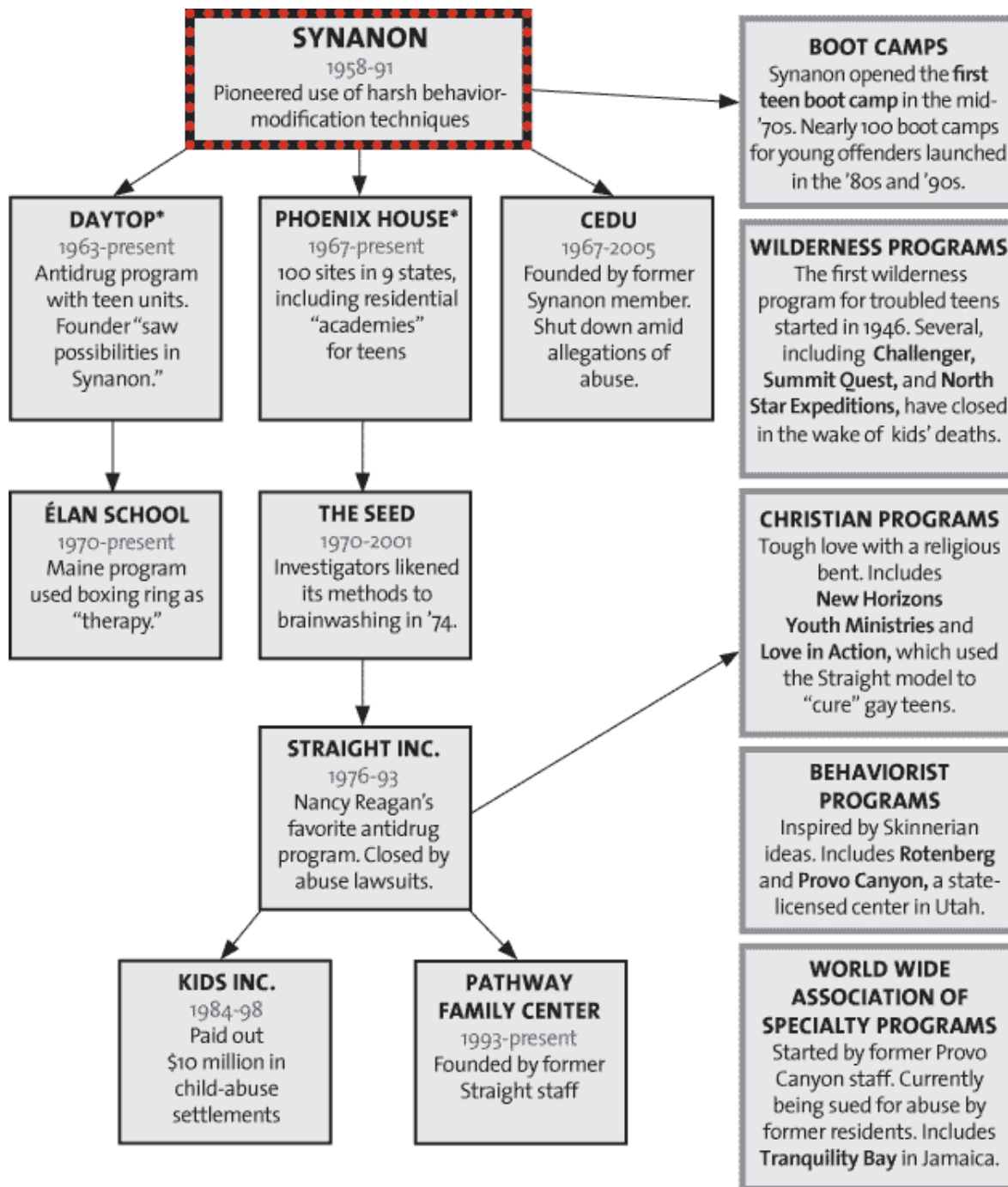


Figure 10.2: Synanon Flow chart from *The Cult That Spawned the Tough-Love Teen Industry* by Maia Szalavitz. (Szalavitz, 2006). Programmes marked \* indicate programmes have disavowed extreme humiliating tactics.

## 10.3 Social Trends and Changing Language in A.A.

### 90 days

Older A.A. members in A.A. today might have become aware of a trend in recent decades for people to coerce A.A. newcomers into going to daily meetings, “ninety meetings in ninety days” in some areas. This phrase which has been spread around A.A. meetings parrot fashion cannot be found in the A.A. programme. The period of ninety days appears to have had some significance in the Synanon cult. According to Yablonski, Dederich was quoted as saying “*Very quickly, in a matter of ninety days, they turn into junior psychiatrists and sociologists. They become familiar with a dozen or twenty words and misuse them*” (Yablonski, 1967:240). A Synanon newcomer placed in a job of minor responsibility by Dederich was quoted by Yablonski as saying “*I didn’t have a yen after those ninety days*” (Yablonski, 1967:21). According to Casriel, Dederich is quoted as saying “*Half of those who enter Synanon stay 90 days*” (Casriel, 1963:175). The ninety day period also appears to have some significance in drug court programmes (Tiger, 2013b:1) and the TC movement. According to Deitch, “*most researchers have concluded (as has George) [De Leon] that a minimum dose of at least 90 days participation is necessary to create some recovery direction. If we closely examine TC retention across the board nationally, we see that by day 30, we generally have lost 25% to 30%; by day 90, 30% to 40%; and by 120 days, about 50%*” (Deitch, 2010).

### Graduation

The notion of ‘graduation’ was part of Synanon philosophy abandoned by Dederich in 1968 (Mitchell, Mitchell Ofshe, 1980:146,147; Ofshe, 1980:111; Morantz, 2013:97). In 1971, Dederich was quoted as saying “*We once had the idea of ‘graduate.’ This was a sop to social workers and professionals who wanted me to say that we were producing ‘graduates.’ I always wanted to say to them, ‘A person with this fatal disease will have to live here all of his life.’ I know damn well if they go out of Synanon they are dead*” (Mitchell, Mitchell Ofshe, 1980:146,147; Ofshe, 1980:111). Synanon’s philosophy of producing “graduates” continues in the TC movement, rehabilitation industry and drug courts. According to De Leon, “*Learning unfolds in stages, with sizable goals leading to ultimate graduation*” (De Leon, 2000:28). In some literature researched for this report people have been described as ‘A.A. graduates’. Graduation cannot be found in the A.A. programme.

### ‘Act as if’ (“Fake it ‘til you make it”)

‘Act as if’ was a Synanon cult philosophy in which, outside Synanon encounter group sessions, Synanon members were expected to smile and express enthusiasm regardless of work assignments and personal angst (Janzen, 2001:16; Ofshe, 1976:130). According to De Leon, “*Act as if*” is a basic TC concept instructing residents and staff to behave as the persons they should be rather than the persons they have been. Despite resistances, perceptions, or feelings to the contrary, they should engage in the expected behaviors and consistently maintain the attitudes of the community. These include self-motivation, commitment to work, and striving, positive regard to staff as authority, and an optimistic outlook to the future. In the TC view, acting as if is not just an exercise in conformity but a powerful mechanism for making a more complete psychological change” (De Leon, 2000:81). According to Dick B., “*Sam’s contribution to the “came to believe” idea of Step Two is a bit harder to discern...But Sam’s footprint is nonetheless there in Step Two. It is embedded in the “do and know” philosophy of Sam Shoemaker, and A.A. (act as if)...*” (Dick B, 2000:79). Contrary to Dick B’s conjecture, “act as if” is embedded in Synanon philosophy, it cannot be found in the A.A. programme. While the footprints of the atheist and agnostic A.A. pioneers were well trodden into Step Two, clearly tread marked as a ‘higher power,’ and ‘power greater than ourselves,’ Sam’s contribution to a so-called “came to believe” idea, is indeed, a bit difficult to discern.

### ‘You can’t just talk the talk, you gotta walk the walk’

According to Glaser, “*It is firmly ensconced in the TC, at least insofar as the necessity for action: ‘You can’t just talk the talk, you gotta walk the walk’*” (Glaser, 1981:18).



## ‘Community’

At the level of AA Grapevine Inc., the language used to describe A.A. is shifting away from ‘fellowship’ as stated in the A.A. preamble, to ‘Community’. Members are now invited to join “*Our Community*” and share with “*the greater AA community*” (AA Grapevine Inc., 2016a).

## Anti - ‘drunkalog’ talk

Older A.A. members might be aware of a trend in recent decades in some A.A. meetings for people to discourage alcoholics from talking about their drinking history in favour of them talking about their ‘recovery’; their drinking history being described, usually in a derogatory manner, as a ‘drunkalog’ or ‘drunkalogue.’

A search of the AA Grapevine digital archive indicates the word ‘drunkalog’ or ‘drunkalogue’ entered AA Grapevine vocabulary around the mid/late 1960s, ‘drunkalogs’ first appearing in AA Grapevine in 1964 (AA Grapevine, 1964).

In March 1968, ‘Drunkalog’ reappeared in the same Grapevine issue that reported Synanon’s “Winds of Change.” The article’s anonymous author writing in a similar vein to the Synanon influenced groups that “...*We get together at the St. Martin’s in the Field Crypt on Tuesdays in London... ..By carefully speaking about the program and how it was obtained, the Steps, the Big Book, a spiritual attitude in life, and how to live, we are establishing meetings which are in sharp contrast to the usual drunkalog and ‘alcoholic therapy’ meetings*” (AA Grapevine, 1968g).

A year later, in March, 1969, “Drunkalogue” appeared in an article authored by an employee of the Sacramento Alcoholism Center, California, who described the treatment center’s “...*forming of an AA training group which would be conducted by a staff member who was also a member of Alcoholics Anonymous... ..Group sessions are structured around a pamphlet entitled “An Interpretation of the Twelve Steps,” which divides the AA program into four phases: (1) admission, (2) spiritual phase, (3) inventory and restitution, and (4) action*”... ..*At the first meeting of the AA training group, a contract is made between the members of the group and the leader. It is established that each person understands that he has been assigned to the group for a specified period of twelve weeks and will then be referred to AA in the community. Rules of the group are clearly stated. “Drunkalogues” are not allowed, and an explanation of the term is given, A “drunkalogue” is a description of a drinking experience detailed to the extent of including the kind and quantity of alcoholic beverage consumed*” (AA Grapevine, 1969).

Loss of the “usual drunkalog and ‘alcohol therapy’ meetings” that existed in A.A. prior to the late 1960s may go some way to explain A.A.’s increasing lack of growth in recent decades.

## Rituals and Ritual Reading

A.A. Members may have noticed a recent trend toward introducing various rituals, including holding of hands, chants of “keep coming back it works if you work it!” along with the repetitive recital of certain selected verses from one week to the next in A.A. meetings. The ritualised reading of the ‘Promises’ cited earlier in this report is one example. Another is that of the recently introduced “Just for Today” card, published by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) which contains certain phrases which have no basis in the Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions: “...*Just for Today I will take my “luck” as it comes, and fit myself to it... ..I will study... ..I will not be a mental loafer... ..I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count... ..I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it... ..I will... ..dress becomingly... ..criticise not one bit, not find fault with anything...*” (General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain), ‘Just for Today’).

Contrary to Traditions Three and Nine, these group rituals are exercises in conformity. Moreover, they may appear to some people, similar to some forms of brainwashing. The ‘Just for Today’ card’s exhortation to “...*criticise not one bit...*” is contrary to the principle of Concept IX: “‘...*There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a fair hearing...*” (The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service).

According to De Leon, “*A prime example of universal ritual in TCs is the daily recitation of the program philosophy*” (De Leon, 2000:90).

## ‘Clean and Sober’

‘Clean’ was a term used in Synanon to describe the process of an addict’s brainwashing and abstention from drug use (Yablonski, 1967:1, 9, 11n, 13, 19,25n, 28, 51, 52, 59, 65, 115, 261). According to Dederich *“When you clean a brain, you wash it. If you have a dirty brain you wash it and make it clean”* (Yablonski, 1967:254). According to Yablonski, *“Typically he [the newcomer] shouts and screams back at his attackers yet he begins to recognize them as real friends trying to help him “clean out his negative insides”* (Yablonski, 1967:260,261). *“The development which takes place is best described as a “resocialization process.” The individual is, in a fashion, “brainwashed” to give up his old deviant patterns”*(Yablonski, 1967:261).The initial use of the word “clean” in double quotation marks by Yablonski and Casriel (Yablonski, 1967:3; Casriel, 1963:9) and the explanation of its meaning *“to be free of all drugs”* in a glossary of Synanon terms (Casriel, 1963: xiii) suggest that its application to describing an addict’s abstention from drugs may have been unique to Synanon and relatively new to American vocabulary. “Clean” has since continued to be used in the TC movement and addiction treatment industry. According to De Leon, *“Residents in TCs therefore, only “discover” that they have choices in life after the have become clean and sober for a period of time”* (De Leon, 2000:41).

A.A. members may be aware of a trend in recent decades toward people introducing themselves as “clean and sober” in A.A. meetings. The threat that such changes of language in A.A. meetings poses to Alcoholics Anonymous parallels that which is recognised by Narcotics Anonymous, adequately explained in their Conference Approved, Bulletin #13.

*“Bill W, one of AA’s co-founders, often said that one of AA’s greatest strengths is its single-minded focus on one thing and one thing only. By limiting its primary purpose to carrying the message to alcoholics, and avoiding all other activities, AA is able to do that one thing supremely well... ..As any NA community matures in its understanding of its own principles (particularly Step One), an interesting fact emerges. The AA perspective, with its alcohol-oriented language, and the NA approach, with its clear need to shift the focus away from specific drugs, don’t mix well. When we try to mix them, we find that we have the same problem as AA had with us all along! When our members identify as “addicts and alcoholics” or talk about “sobriety” and living “clean and sober,” the clarity of the NA message is blurred... ..At first glance this seems minor, but our experience clearly shows that the full impact of the NA message is crippled by this subtle semantic confusion... ..Our members who have been unintentionally blurring the NA message by using drug-specific language such as “sobriety,” “alcoholic,” “clean and sober,” “dope fiend,” etc., could help by identifying simply and clearly as addicts, and using the words “clean,” “clean time,” and “recovery,” which imply no particular substance. We all could help by referring to only our own literature at meetings, thereby avoiding any implied endorsement or affiliation. Our principles stand on their own. For the sake of our development as a fellowship and the personal recovery of our members, our approach to the problem of addiction must shine through clearly in what we say and do at meetings. Both fellowships have a Sixth Tradition for a reason: to keep each one from being diverted from its own primary purpose. Because of the inherent need of a Twelve Step fellowship to focus on one thing and one thing only, so that it can do that one thing supremely well, each Twelve Step fellowship must stand alone, unaffiliated with everything else. It is in our nature to be separate, to feel separate, and use a separate set of recovery terms, because we each have a separate, unique primary purpose. The focus of AA is on the alcoholic, and we ought to respect that fellowship’s perfect right to adhere to its own traditions and protect its focus. If we cannot use language consistent with that, we ought not go to their meetings and undermine that atmosphere. In the same way, we NA members ought to respect our own primary purpose and identify ourselves at NA meetings simply as addicts, and share in a way that keeps our message clear.”* (Narcotics Anonymous, 1996, Bulletin #13)

## 10.4 Disease Theory Controversy

This section of the report examines controversy surrounding disease theory of alcoholism and how this has been linked to A.A., resulting in public criticism of A.A.

The introduction of the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) into the U.S. Healthcare system on 1st October 2015 may warrant some attention from A.A. members at all levels of service, for ICD-10 does not classify alcoholism as a disease. According to the World Health Organisation, "*The International Classification of Diseases (ICD) is the standard diagnostic tool for epidemiology, health management and clinical purposes... ...ICD-10 was endorsed by the Forty-third World Health Assembly in May 1990 and came into use in WHO Member States as from 1994*" (WHO, 2015a). "*Alcoholism is not included as a diagnostic entity in ICD-10*" (WHO, 2015). ICD-10 was introduced into the US healthcare system on 1st October, 2015 (AMA, 2015; CMS.gov, 2015), after reportedly being delayed several times since 1994 (Techtarget, 2015).

The origins and dissemination of disease theory and the ways in which it has been linked to Alcoholics Anonymous are complex. Cultural and medical theories classifying alcoholism as a disease in the United States date back to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Tiger, 2013:78-79; Travis, 2009:24-25; WHO, 2015). Modern disease theory emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, mainly from the work of E.M Jellinek, a Yale University biostatistician who collaborated with A.A. member Marty M., founder of the National Council for Education on Alcoholism (NCEA). Marty M. promoted the disease concept of alcoholism within and outside A.A. The disease concept also featured in the mind of Charles Dederich, founder of the Synanon cult, a major influence on addiction treatment. According to Dederich, "*I always wanted to say to them, 'A person with this fatal disease will have to live here all of his life.' I know damn well if they go out of Synanon they are dead*" (Mitchell, Mitchell Ofshe, 1980:146,147; Ofshe, 1980:111).

Today, influential treatment facilities teach hybrid forms of the A.A. programme mixed with disease theory as though disease theory should be considered part of the A.A. programme. According to the Hazelden Betty Ford foundation, "*Patients in treatment at the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation are taught that addiction is a disease – a treatable disease*" "*You don't negotiate with this disease, you either recover from it or you don't... ...On page 58 of AA's Big Book, the following invitation is offered: 'If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are ready to take certain steps'... ...We cannot recover from a disease by studying it. We recover from a disease by treating it*" "*...the core of the disease is the cluster of behavioral symptoms that constitute the mental disorder called alcoholism.*" "*The disease of addiction has a target organ known as the mid brain... ...The family is very affected by the disease of addiction... ...The disease of addiction, like other diseases, is chronic and organic. It sites the brain as its target organ...*" "*Addiction is a disease that impacts the entire family system. It is therefore important that all family members have an opportunity to gain information and knowledge about the disease.*" "*Alcoholism is a disease... ...we can view alcoholism as an involuntary disability — a disease — and treat it as such.*" "*Over the past few years, our understanding of addiction has transitioned from a perspective of acute care to viewing addiction as a longer term, chronic disease that must be treated and monitored, much like other chronic conditions such as diabetes.*" "*Addiction is called a family disease for good reason. Families are in pain. By the time most families reach out for help, the disease has progressed to a crisis level... ...Knowing that the disease of addiction can be passed from one generation to the next, our prevention programs embrace children who are directly affected and educate K-12 students, their parents and school communities.*" (Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, 1998, 2011, 2016, 2016a,b,c,d,e).

According to the Joe McQ treatment facility inspired Primary Purpose Big Book Study Guide,

*"They will also demonstrate four more truths about this killer disease; that alcoholism is (1) a permanent condition, it is (2) a progressive disease, (3) it is a very patient disease*

18. *So, what did he do?*

*Comment: Is chronic alcoholism a patient disease - the "insidious insanity?"*

*Question: Was alcoholism still present after a 25 year period of abstinence? Comment: We were told that alcoholism is a permanent disease*

19. *After two months of drinking, was his condition better or worse than it had been at age 30?*

*Comment: We were told that alcoholism is a progressive disease, whether or not we continue to drink."*(PPBBSG, 2016:30,33).

The classification of alcoholism and drug addiction as a disease has not been universally accepted. (WHO, 2015). It has proved controversial within the United States medical profession and criminal justice system (Peele, 1995;

Peele et al., 2000; Tiger, 2013). During the 1990s and 2000s the disease concept of alcoholism came under increasing criticism in the USA (Peele, 1995; Travis, 2009; Tiger, 2013). Where disease theory has become confused with A.A., in 12-Step Treatment facilities and alcoholism educational facilities, this has resulted in public criticism of A.A. (Peele, 1995; Peele et al., 2000).

A random survey of 6,000 A.A. members in 2014 showed that 32% were introduced to A.A. via treatment facilities, 59% received some form of treatment or counselling before they joined A.A., 58% received some form of treatment or counselling after they joined. 12% were introduced via the judicial system and 2% via correctional facilities (A.A. World Services Inc., 2014). It is possible that if A.A. members are taught that alcoholism is a disease by professionals whilst in treatment, some might just believe what they have been taught; then carry this notion into A.A. It is likely that those A.A. members who adopt a belief in the disease concept of alcoholism acquire this belief from medical and cultural influences, rather than from the A.A. programme itself (Kurtz, 2002; Zafridis, 2012). There may be many A.A. members, including the authors of this report, who do not believe alcoholism is a disease.

In his paper “Alcoholics anonymous and narcotics anonymous: A radical movement under threat” Professor Zafridis describes the threat posed to A.A. by members adopting the disease concept of addiction:

***“The threat from the disease concept of addiction***

*During our 10-year interaction with AA and NA members in Greece, we were able to identify an increasingly broadened approval of the biological perception towards addiction, a trend attenuated in the last 5 years. This might be a local phenomenon due to the lack of long-term self-help tradition in Greece. However, this general observation is in agreement with the arguments presented by Kurtz (2004). The authors consider that the exaggerated emphasis on the biology of addiction driven by the scientific community downgrades the historical significance attributed by AA and NA groups on the role of spiritual dimension in the recovery process. This could potentially nullify, in the future, one of the most radical approaches introduced by AA and NA in the treatment of addictions...”* (Zafridis, Lainas, 2012:99)

In a paper entitled “*Alcoholics Anonymous and the Disease Concept of Alcoholism*” historian Ernest Kurtz concluded that “...it is unlikely that the question of the historical relationship between Alcoholics Anonymous and the disease concept of alcoholism will ever be definitively resolved... ..On the basic question, the data are clear: Contrary to common opinion, Alcoholics Anonymous neither originated nor promulgated what has come to be called the disease concept of alcoholism. Yet its members did have a large role in spreading and popularizing that understanding” (Kurtz, 2002:6).

The A.A. programme, as defined in the principles of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service, does not define alcoholism as a disease. The ‘Big Book’ Alcoholics Anonymous, first published in 1939, does not define alcoholism as a disease in the first 164 pages. It is generally considered that any opinions expressed in personal stories after page 164 are individual interpretations that do not necessarily accord with a majority. Some of these personal opinions reflect a belief in a disease concept, others do not. The book ‘Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions’ first published in 1953, does not define alcoholism as a disease. In both books alcoholism is loosely described using broad terms such as ‘illness’ or ‘malady.’ The word ‘disease’ can only be found twice in the A.A. programme. In both cases, neither of these contexts relate directly to ‘alcoholism.’ On page 64 of the ‘Big Book’ the word is used as a metaphor to explain ‘resentment’ (A.A. ‘Big Book’:64). In the ‘Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions’ the word is used in Tradition Five, relating to ‘cancer’ (A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:150).

A major contribution to the linking of the disease concept of alcoholism with Alcoholics Anonymous occurred in the 1940s and 1950s with the associated work of biostatistician E.M. Jellinek at the Yale Center for Alcohol Studies and Marty M., an A.A. member who founded the National Council for Education on Alcoholism (NCEA), later re-named the National Council on Alcoholism (NCA) (A.A. World Services Inc, 1984:310,320; Travis, 2009:36-44, Peele, 1995:119,120; Peele et al, 2000:11n). The NCA was renamed the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) (NCADD, 2016). The work of the NCEA was initially strongly supported by A.A. co-founders Dr. Bob and Bill W. However, they withdrew after their support became controversial. Marty M broke her anonymity at the public level and sent an NCEA fundraising letter implying that A.A. endorsed the NCEA which caused uproar within A.A. (A.A. World Services Inc, 1984:310,320). An A.A. trustee wrote to Bill W. in 1946 saying “*If this letter should ever go out to the A.A. mailing list quoting A.A. throughout and soliciting funds on a letterhead that carries both your name and Dr. Bob Smith’s as sponsors, no little hell would be popping.*” Dr. Bob and Bill W. withdrew from the NCEA within a year (A.A. World Services Inc, 1984:320). In 1948 Bill W. wrote to an A.A. member “...*I confess a great deal of fault with myself. Several years ago, we did not realise the protective value of anonymity to the A.A. movement as a whole. When, for educational purposes, Marty broke hers,*

*I consented to it. In the light of later events, that has proved to be a mistake. In our Traditions pamphlet you will find an acknowledgement of that error” (A.A. World Services Inc, 1984:310,311).*

The disease concept of alcoholism was heavily promoted in AA Grapevine in its early years. Marty M. and three of her friends were among those who started AA Grapevine (Kurtz, 2008:15). Marty “...helped to organize, edit and write the AA Grapevine” (Travis, 2009:41). The journal’s early news stories carried an NCEA inclined bias (Kurtz, 2008:15,17). “*The very first article of the very first issue headlined: “Two Yale Savants Stress Alcoholism a True Disease”... ...Mann [Marty M.] apparently saw this venture as another way of spreading the ideas that led her to form the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism, which is given much prominence in early AAGV stories.*” (Kurtz, 2008:15).

According to Travis, “*For much of the 1940s and 1950s, Mann travelled the country, sharing this insight at medical conferences and rotary clubs, clerical retreats and women’s benevolent organisations. By all accounts a gifted strategist as well as a mesmerizing public speaker and witty conversationalist, “the lady ex-lush,” as she was sometimes called, proved an extremely compelling spokesperson and, ultimately, a lobbyist. Her indefatigable personal testimony, recapitulated and extended in the NCEA’s pamphlet literature and her popular Primer on Alcoholism (1950), played a central role in introducing the public to the disease concept of alcoholism. Mann’s success in swaying public opinion was in part due to the fact that her crusading spirit meant that she had few qualms about overstating her case. In an article announcing the founding of the NCEA in the Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, she proclaimed that the fact “that alcoholism is a disease, rather than a moral shortcoming, has been known to scientists for a considerable time, but unfortunately this knowledge has never become public property.” Her aim was to make what she called the “unguarded secret” of the disease into public knowledge. This zeal – which was shared by other key early members of the NCEA whose lives had been touched by alcoholism – made Mann remarkably effective at public relations and lobbying... ...At the same time, Yale researchers found themselves increasingly uneasy with Mann’s lack of interest in the scientific validity (or lack thereof) of her claims. After Jellinek left the Yale Center in 1947, his replacement, sociologist Selden Bacon, made no attempt to hide his distaste for what he called the “propagandist...crusade” of Mann’s “alcoholism cult.” The NCEA and the Yale Center parted ways in 1950, just as Mann published her Primer on Alcoholism, a popular volume of disease - concept ideas. Featured in the Book of the Month Club News, the Primer instantly spread the word of the ‘baffling disease of alcoholism’ to the club’s nearly 1 million members” (Travis, 2009:42,43).*

Before Bill W. realised he had made a controversial mistake in allowing outside enterprises to link themselves to A.A., he had supported the educational work of Jellinek and Marty M. in a 1944 AA Grapevine article: “*Not long ago Dr. E.M. Jellinek, of Yale University, came to us. He said, “Yale as you know, is sponsoring a program of public education on alcoholism, entirely noncontroversial in character. We need cooperation of many AAs. To proceed on any education project concerning alcoholism without the goodwill, experience, and help of AA members would be unthinkable.” So, when the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism [now the National Council on Alcoholism] was formed, an AA member was made its executive director: Marty M., one of our oldest and finest. As a member of AA, she is just as much interested in us as before – AA is still her avocation. But as an officer of the Yale –sponsored National Committee, she is also interested in educating the general public on alcoholism...*” (The Language of the Heart:100).

In 1958 Bill W. wrote “*Some years ago, a number of us A.A.’s wanted to enter the field of alcohol education. I was one of them. We associated ourselves with some nonalcoholics, likewise interested. The nonalcoholics wanted A.A.’s because they needed our experience, philosophy, and general slant. Things were fine until some of us A.A.’s publicly disclosed our membership in the educational group. Right away, the public got the idea that this particular brand of alcohol education and Alcoholics Anonymous were one and the same thing. It took years to change this impression. But now that this correction has been made, plenty of A.A. members work in this field, and we are glad that they do. It was thus proven that, as individuals, we can carry the A.A. experience and ideas into any outside field whatever, provided that we guard anonymity and refuse to use the A.A. name for money-raising or publicity purposes” ( The Language of the Heart:224,225).*

Also in 1958, contrary to most articles Bill W. wrote relating to A.A. policy and Traditions, he wrote another article in AA Grapevine, again supporting the work of Jellinek and Marty M. This time referring to “*the disease of alcoholism*” and Jellinek by his nickname “*Bunky*” (The Language of the Heart:187,188). This Grapevine article, however, contradicted Bill’s public position. When asked a question after addressing an annual meeting of the National Catholic Clergy Conference on Alcoholism in 1960, Bill W. gave the following reply: “*We have never called alcoholism a disease because, technically speaking, it is not a disease entity. For example, there is no such thing as heart disease. Instead there are many separate heart ailments, or combinations of them. It is something like that*

with alcoholism. Therefore we did not wish to get in wrong with the medical profession by pronouncing alcoholism a disease entity. Therefore we always called it an illness, or a malady – a far safer term for us to use.” (Kurtz, 2002:9).

Elements of Jellinek’s emerging disease concept of alcoholism proved controversial among some at the Yale, he left in 1948, chairing a World Health Organisation committee on alcohol and alcoholism in 1951 (Travis, 2009:38,40,43). His conclusions in a 1946 article derived from a questionnaire to alcoholics published in AA Grapevine in 1945, in which there were 98 respondents, have been described as “...based on deeply problematic data... ...and hardly a “scientific study” (Travis, 2009:39). A further study involving a questionnaire of 2000 alcoholics published in 1952 became “...probably the most widely diffused artefact of the Alcoholism Movement,” reproduced in all manner of educational and public relations literature” (Travis, 2009:40). “In 1951 the World Health Organisation’s Expert Committee on Alcohol and Alcoholism, chaired by E.M Jellinek declared alcoholism a disease” (Travis, 2009:43). In 1960 Jellinek published “*The Disease Concept of Alcoholism*,” (College and University Press/Hillhouse Press, 1960). In 1977, a World Health Organisation committee proposed replacing the disease concept with “*alcohol dependence syndrome*” (WHO, 2015). Alcoholism was not included as a diagnostic entity in the World Health Organisation’s *International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10)* in 1990 (WHO, 2015a).

Only 6% of the American nation viewed alcoholism as a disease in 1944, rising to 58% in 1957 (NCADD, 2016a) to almost 90% in 1987 (Peele, 1995:46).

Today despite what is known about the confusion between the NCEA/NCA and A.A. in the 1940s, and the need for such organisations to avoid using the A.A. name in their publicity, NCADD makes confusing use of the A.A. name in its publicity in 2016. In articles entitled “*NCADD and Alcoholics Anonymous*” and “*Our Founder Marty Mann: Alcoholism Pioneer 1904-1980*” NCADD documents a history of the NCADD and Marty M’s involvement with A.A. as though the history of NCADD began with the meeting of Bill W. and Dr. Bob in 1935. NCADD quotes Bill W’s 1958 endorsement of the NCA alongside his photograph, and alongside the NCADD’s position on Alcoholism: “*Alcoholism is a disease, and the alcoholic is a sick person,*” as though Bill W. endorsed NCADD and its disease concept of alcoholism (NCADD, 2016, 2016a).



Figure 10.3: “**Bill W., AA co-founder** Bill W., AA co-founder, on the accomplishments of NCADD: “No other single agency has done more to educate the public, to open up hospitalization, and to set in motion all manner of constructive projects than this one.”- *The Language of the Heart*)”

Photo and caption: NCADD website (NCADD, 2016)

It may be noted that when Bill W. wrote this in 1958, he was not referring the accomplishments of NCADD, but its predecessor, the NCA. (*The Language of the Heart*:189).



Figure 10.4: The “lady ex-lush” and “Bunky” (also known as Marty Mann and E.M. Jellinek) Photo: NCADD website (NCADD, 2016a)

In 2016, as with the NCEA/NCA in the 1940s, it may appear to some that the NCADD brand of alcohol education and Alcoholics Anonymous are one and the same thing . It may take years for A.A. to change this impression:

*“By the 1970s, AA had become the model for all treatment groups and a linchpin in the provision of services for drinking problems in the United States. At the same time, the National Council on Alcoholism (the public relations arm of the AA movement) convinced Americans that there are millions of unrecognized and unacknowledged alcoholics who require immediate medical and group treatment” (Peele, 1995:24). “Marty Mann (1981) a cofounder of AA’s educational front group, the National Council on Alcoholism (now the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence) traced the growing estimates of the number of alcoholics in the United States from 3 million in 1943 to 5 million in 1956 to 6.5 million in 1965 to ‘9.3 to 10 million alcoholics and problem drinkers’ in 1975” (Peele et al., 2000:11n).*

The disease concept is highlighted by the self-published fundamentalist ‘AA historian’ Dick B: *“Henrietta [wife of AA Number Three, Bill Dotson, as Bill Wilson addressed her:], the Lord has been so wonderful to me, curing me of this terrible disease, that I just want to keep talking about it and telling people.” - William Griffith Wilson, CoFounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, 1935 From Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition, 2001, p. 191” (Dick B, 2015b).* In his deceptively distorted version of history, what Dick B. omits to mention is that when Bill D. recalled Bill W. saying this to him in 1935, Bill W. was little more than six months sober at the time and mostly failing in his efforts to sober up alcoholics (A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:67,68). By the time the Big Book was published in 1939, the idea of a ‘cure’ had been rejected (A.A. ‘Big Book’:85), the word “disease” does not appear in the first 164 pages. It may be noted that the use of the “idiom of disease and cure” within a “biomedical vision” has been used politically for coercive control of certain populations (Lifton, 1989: ix,13).

There are estimated to be around 140 million alcoholics worldwide (WHO, 2015b) and around 2 million A.A. members worldwide. A.A. members might sound more attractive to the world’s 140 million alcoholics in future, if they employ traditional language expressed in the first 164 pages of the ‘Big Book’ and in the ‘Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions’, which describe alcoholism in vague terms such as ‘illness’ or ‘malady’. This report recommends the fellowship reviews all Conference Approved pamphlets and withdraws those which contrary Tradition Ten and the World Health Organisation’s *International Classification of Diseases (ICD10)*, express a public opinion that alcoholism is a disease, a contentious outside issue; thereby drawing A.A. into public controversy. *“A Member’s Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous”*, page 11; *“Is A.A. for You?”*, 2nd paragraph; and *“Do Think You Are Different?”*, Page 7: *“We in A.A. believe alcoholism is a disease”*, are just a few examples of erroneous pamphlets currently published by A.A. World Services. There are ‘we’ in A.A. who do not believe alcoholism is a disease.

The public expression of a belief in an outside, controversial medical theory in Conference Approved pamphlets and by A.A. members, combined with the promotion of disease theory alongside the name Alcoholics Anonymous by outside enterprises within the treatment industry, appears to have brought A.A. into public controversy. Moreover, it may be limiting the appeal of A.A. to a restricted number of alcoholics.

## 10.5 Misuse of Alcoholics Anonymous as an Addiction Treatment

It is perhaps, testimony to the power of modern thought reform techniques operating within programmes of re-education that despite all that has been published in A.A. Conference Approved literature, concerning Alcoholics Anonymous history, the *Twelve Traditions*, and the *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, that elements of the medical profession (Peele, 1995; NHS, 2006:44), para-professional A.A. members working in the addiction treatment industry and even a Trustee of the A.A. General Service Board (Vaillant, 2005), could possibly conceive Alcoholics Anonymous to be a treatment for alcoholism. By turning Alcoholics Anonymous into a vocational treatment the profession may one day realise that they have lost what once was a valuable aid to their treatments for alcoholism. The 12-Step treatment industry is estimated to be worth around \$10 billion dollars per year, many 12-Step treatment facilities are owned and staffed by A.A. members, the industry employing tens, if not hundreds of thousands of 12 step group members (Peele et al., 2000:12,38). “*..AA’s good name as a voluntaristic organization has been severely tarnished; and the tens of billions of dollars spent on 12-step treatment have had no discernable effect on the rate of alcohol abuse*” (Peele et al., 2000:12). The following are extracts from Alcoholics Anonymous history:

*“That we must, at all costs, avoid the professionalization of AA; that simple Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for; that AAs going into alcohol therapy should never trade on their AA connection; that there is not, and never can be, any such thing as an ‘AA therapist’.* - Bill W. (The Language of the Heart:29)

*“We cannot lend the AA name, even indirectly, to other activities, however worthy. If we do so we shall become hopelessly compromised and divided. We think that AA should offer its experience to the whole world for whatever use can be made of it. But not its name. Nothing could be more certain.”* - Bill W. ( The Language of the Heart:80).”

*“Of highest importance would be our relations with medicine and religion. Under no circumstances must we get into competition with either. If we appeared to be a new religious sect, we’d certainly be done for. And if we moved into the medical field, as such, the result would be the same. So we began to emphasize heavily the fact that A.A. was a way of life that conflicted with no one’s religious belief. We told the doctors how much we needed hospitalization, and we urged upon psychiatrists and drying-out places the advantages of cooperating with us. At all times religion would be the province of clergy and the practice of medicine would be for doctors. As laymen, we were only supplying a much needed missing link. ”* - Bill W. ( The Language of the Heart:150).

In his paper “*Alcoholics anonymous and narcotics anonymous: A radical movement under threat*” Professor Zafiridis describes the threat posed to A.A. from private treatment centres:

### ***“The threat from private treatment centres***

*For the past three decades at the international level (Makela et al., 1996; White, 2010), and for the past few years in Greece, there has been a steep increase in the number of private, profit-making centres which offer treatment for addiction, and base their methods on the AA and NA 12-step programme. The propaganda which supports the function of these private programmes relies, on the one hand, on the need for a change of setting, and, on the other, on the intensive attempts to raise awareness of the 12-step method. As a rule, and regardless of whether they are founded by AA or NA members or by entrepreneurs, these centres hire experienced AA or NA members as their therapists. These AA or NA members even though they are well rewarded for their services, as professional or paraprofessional counsellors, they still continue to participate in the evening meetings of their AA or NA groups. The criterion used in hiring these individuals is not only their knowledge of the 12 steps, but also their ability to attract wealthy members of the AA or NA groups to the private treatment centre where they are working. Hence their regular participation in AA and NA groups is the condition which assures their employment position. Although these treatment centres do not claim to be genuine AA or NA self-help groups, their operations as a whole, the staffing and the therapeutic methods they use are all taken from the Anonymous system.*

*The vast increase in the number of private treatment centres has led to the appearance of a veritable army of addiction counsellors. These are people who have already dealt with their own addiction problem within the AA or NA system, and, therefore, base their methodology of approaching and motivating addicts, on the new ‘tool’ in their possession, which is none other than the 12-step programme. These counsellors – some of whom have some form of training and certification as counsellors, and some of whom do not (depending on the law of the country where they live) – either work in one of the addiction treatment centres mentioned above, or from their own premises on a*



*free-lance basis. These new para-professionals, in order to earn credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the addicts and their families, over-emphasize the value of the therapeutic method they employ (i.e. the 12-step programme), and the value of their own experiential knowledge. The worst aspect of this development is that these members in order to earn a living detach the 12-step method from its natural environment, that is self-help groups, and transfer it in their professional environments as if this method is an autonomous therapeutic instrument... ...Just because the 12-step method was effective within a self-help group, this does not mean that it will remain so when it is transferred to a private context... ...Another particular significant side effect is the indirect influence on the internal working of the group. These addiction counsellors do not enter the groups with an inclination to learn but to teach as specifically mentioned by Kurtz (2004). Having learned by heart but not really experienced the 12 steps, since the latter requires a long stay and commitment to a specific group, they cancel out in total the existential and spiritual dimension of the effort, reducing the 12-step ritual to a drained intellectual/mechanical process...” (Zafirir, Lainas, 2012: 96,97).*

The argument which exists in the treatment industry, medical profession and social sciences over AA’s effectiveness as a treatment when it is not a treatment is unlikely come to any fruitful conclusion. The reason why A.A. cannot be applied as a treatment, or be evaluated by scientific means, is perhaps explained in the following excerpts of writing by A.A. co-founder, Bill W., and Albert Einstein:

*“We A.A.s are often heard to say that our fellowship is founded upon resources that we have drawn from medicine, from religion, and our own experience of drinking and of recovery.” (Bill W., The Language of the Heart: 375). “At all times religion would be the province of clergy and the practice of medicine would be for doctors. As laymen, we were only supplying a much needed missing link.” (Bill W., The Language of the Heart:150).*

*“...In this sense religion is the age-old endeavor of mankind to become clearly and completely conscious of these values and goals and constantly to strengthen and extend their effect. If one conceives of religion and science according to these definitions then a conflict between them appears impossible. For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be, and outside its of its domain value judgements of all kinds remain necessary. Religion, on the other hand, deals only with evaluations of human thought and action: it cannot justifiably speak of facts and relationships between facts. According to this interpretation the well-known conflicts between religion and science in the past must all be ascribed to a misapprehension of the situation which has been described.*

*For example, a conflict arises when a religious community insists on the absolute truthfulness of all statements recorded in the Bible. This means an intervention on the part of religion into the sphere of science; this is where the struggle of the Church against the doctrines of Galileo and Darwin belongs. On the other hand, representatives of science have often made an attempt at fundamental judgements with respect to values and ends on the basis of scientific method, and in this way have set themselves in opposition to religion. These conflicts have all sprung from fatal errors.*

*Now, even though the realms of religion and science in themselves are clearly marked off from each other, nevertheless, there exist between the two strong reciprocal relationships and dependencies. Though religion may be that which determines the goal, it has, nevertheless, learned from science, in its broadest sense, what means will contribute to the attainment of the goals it has set up. But science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration towards the truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs the faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind...” (Einstein, 1950:25,26).*

*“Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religion, nor is it a medical treatment, nor does it profess expertise in respect of unconscious or conscious motivations for behavior. These facts are all to often overlooked.” - Bill W. (The Language of the Heart:333)*

*If we recognize that religion is the province of the clergy and medicine is the practice for doctors, we can helpfully cooperate with both (A.A. Service Manual, 2015:68; Concept 12, Warranty Five).*

## 10.6 Alcoholism, Narcissism and Cult Leadership

The personality traits characteristic of alcoholics described by psychiatrist Harry Tiebout in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* and the personality traits characteristic of cult leaders described by leading professionals working in the field of cultic studies appear to be similar:

*“Characteristic of the so-called typical alcoholic is a narcissistic ego-centric core, dominated by feelings of omnipotence, intent on maintaining at all costs its inner integrity. While these characteristics are found in other maladjustments, they appear in relatively pure culture in alcoholic after alcoholic. In a careful study of a series of cases, Sillman recently reported that he could discern the outlines of a common character structure among problem drinkers and that the best terms he could find for the group of qualities noted was “defiant individuality” and “grandiosity.” In my opinion, those words were accurately chosen. Inwardly the alcoholic brooks no control from man nor God. He, the alcoholic, is and must be the master of his destiny. He will fight to the end to preserve that position... ..The narcissistic component in the character is submerged, at least for the time being, and in its place there is a much more mature and objective person, who can meet life situations positively and affirmatively without escape into alcohol... .. They must lose the narcissistic element permanently; otherwise the program of Alcoholics Anonymous works only temporarily... ..there is all the difference in the world between a true, emotional, religious feeling and the vague, groping, sceptical, intellectual belief which passes as a religious feeling in the minds of many people. Regardless of final conception of that Power, unless the individual attains in the course of time a sense of the reality and nearness of a Greater Power, his egocentric nature will reassert itself with undiminished intensity and drinking will enter into the picture”* (‘Therapeutic Mechanism of Alcoholics Anonymous’ by Harry M. Tiebout M.D., *American Journal of Psychiatry*, January 1944; A.A. World Services Inc., 1957:311-317).

*“Cultic groups and relationships are formed primarily to meet the specific needs of the leaders, many of whom appear to suffer from some form of emotional or character disorder. Few, if any, cult leaders subject themselves to the psychological tests or prolonged clinical interviews that might allow for an accurate diagnosis. However, researchers and clinicians who study and observe cult leaders describe them variously as ego-centric, narcissistic, megalomaniacal, neurotic, psychotic, psychopathic, sociopathic, or suffering from a diagnosed personality disorder. Clearly, not all cult leaders (nor necessarily any of the leaders mentioned in this book ) have personality disorders. Nevertheless, there appears to be significant psychological and social dysfunction in some cult leaders, whose behaviors demonstrate features rather consistent with several disturbing personality disorders”* (Lalich, Tobais, 2006:57,58). *“Robert Hare, an expert in the study of psychopathy, offered a description of the psychopathic personality that coincides with the behaviour and actions of many cult leaders. Hare estimated that there are at least 2 million sociopaths or psychopaths, in North America. He writes, “Psychopaths are social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations, and empty wallets. Completely lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, they selfishly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret”* (Lalich, Tobias, 2006:59).

While the majority of A.A. members do not appear to exhibit such extreme disorders, few people within or outside the fellowship would not admit to behaving inappropriately out of self-interest sometime in their lives. It is likely, however, that the membership of Alcoholics Anonymous has a higher proportion of people suffering from such narcissistic personality disorders or borderline disorders than in society at large. These types of alcoholic may require professional psychiatric and psychological interventions to help them with their mental problems quite apart from dealing with their abnormal drinking habits, if they are to gain a measure of sobriety that is both useful to themselves, to Alcoholics Anonymous, and to society at large.

The authors of this report suggest that the reader becomes acquainted with of the symptoms of ‘Overt Narcissism’ and ‘Covert Narcissism’ as well as the characteristics of a cult leader; much information is readily available on the Internet. A small bibliography of suggested reading is provided at the end of this report. Although an alcoholic may be able to abstain from drinking alcohol, organise a group, be a charismatic speaker, operate a business or a treatment facility, write books about A.A. history or on how to work the A.A. programme, and moreover be an effective salesman in promoting their ideas, this may not signify recovery, but rather exemplify narcissism and cult leadership.

The reaction of A.A. members to the Little Rock plan in 1947, Charles Dederich in 1958, and the Synanon/Daytop influenced groups in 1968, may provide valuable *Lessons of Experience* for the fellowship today and in forthcoming years, in how to recognise and resist cult group formation. If today, individual A.A. members or groups who display such characteristics cannot experience for themselves, *“a sense of the reality and nearness of a Greater Power”*, then for the sake of protecting vulnerable newcomers and the common welfare of A.A. as a whole, A.A. members must

intervene accordingly and provide this reality and nearness for them – *a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience*. This practical application of Tradition Two and Concept IX was clearly demonstrated in Santa Monica in 1958, voiced explicitly in A.A. Grapevine in 1947 and again in 1968. The responsibility for this expression remains with in each and every member of A.A. (Concept I; Dr. Bob, 1948:20). Failure to apply this A.A. Tradition will inevitably lead to the continued presence of figureheads in A.A. leading to A.A. groups degenerating into cults (The Jack Alexander Article about A.A.:23)

## 10.7 Circuit speakers and speaker recordings

Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of so called ‘AA’ celebrity speakers. Some are professional or paraprofessional recovery movement circuit speakers who have blurred what once was a traditional boundary between the professional treatment industry and non-professional A.A. Foremost amongst these anonymity breaking professionals are Joe McQuany and Charlie Palmer (Joe McQ. and Charlie P.), (founders of treatment centres), Fr. Martin®, co-founder of a treatment centre and trademark of Ashley Inc.; Wally Paton (Wally P.), founder of the Back to Basics TC, Robert Burns (Dick B.), founder of Freedom Ranch Maui Inc., Clancy Imislunde (Clancy I.) director of the Midnight Mission, Chris and Myers Raymer, staff at Origins Recovery.

There appears to be considerable ignorance or even wilful disregard, of the A.A. Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service exhibited by professionals working within certain sectors of the treatment industry and also within A.A. itself. Some of these speakers may be acting out of ignorance, or to satisfy a narcissistic craving for power, money and prestige, while others may be products of hybrid Synanon - 12-step thought reform programs, afflicted with what George Orwell described as “doublethink.” To believe that one can simultaneously be an anonymous and famous member of Alcoholics Anonymous, professional and non-professional, are examples of “doublethink” as explained by Orwell:

*Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. The Party intellectual knows in which direction his memories must be altered; he therefore knows that he is playing tricks with reality; but by the exercise of doublethink he also satisfies himself that reality is not violated. The process has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity and hence guilt... ..to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complete honesty... ..To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just as long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies – all this is indispensably necessary. Even in using the word doublethink it is necessary to exercise doublethink. For by using the word one admits that one is tampering with reality; by a fresh act of doublethink one erases this knowledge; and so on indefinitely, with the lie always one leap ahead of the truth.”* (Orwell, 1949: part II, Chapter IX).

Charles Dederich claimed to be a popular A.A. speaker before he formed the Synanon cult, though he also recalled that A.A. members stopped him from speaking at A.A. meetings and told him to shut up or get lost (Casriel, 1963:18). In Synanon, Dederich used audio recordings of his speeches broadcast through loud speakers as a means of exercising his authority and control over cult members; a communication system known as the “Wire.” (Morantz, 2015:224,612). In these recordings Dederich issued directives to cult members in various rants and veiled messages. His exhortations to cult members to attack Paul Morantz for example, were repeatedly announced over the wire (Morantz, 2015:487,501). According to Morantz, “*In the late 1970’s Synanon added a new method of cause and effect known as Think Table or Court, where Charles Dederich would speak various philosophies on how he wanted people and the world to be, speaking into a microphone which broadcast throughout the community over. The Wire, tape-recorded and rebroadcasted into a world that had reached George Orwell’s 1984... ..well in advance of that date*” (Morantz, 2015:556).

The widespread circulation of modern audio recordings by treatment professionals targeted at A.A. members has enabled a number of celebrity speakers to wield a disproportionate amount of undue influence within A.A. by using a communication method similar to Synanon’s “Wire.” The reported cult-like behaviour of groups adhering to the doctrines of speakers such as Clancy I, Wayne B, Wally P., and Joe McQ’s “Big Book Sponsorship” are documented on websites such as aacultwatch, (aacultwatch.blogspot.co.uk) and Orange Papers, (www.orange-papers.org). There now appear to be hundreds of anonymity breaking recorded speakers, who follow in their wake, mindlessly repeating

what they have been taught like brainwashed parrots, similar to Orwell's duckspeakers:

*"Ultimately it was hoped to make articulate speech issue from the larynx without involving the higher brain centres at all. This aim was frankly admitted in the Newspeak word duckspeak meaning 'to quack like a duck.' Like various words in the B vocabulary, duckspeak was ambivalent in meaning. Provided that the opinions which were quacked out were orthodox ones, it implied nothing but praise, and when the Times referred to one of the orators of the Party as adoubleplusgood duckspeaker it was paying a warm and valued compliment"*(Orwell, 1949: Appendix).

It is questionable whether some conventions supposedly organised under the A.A. name are in fact organised by businesses exploiting the A.A. name. Though some of the organisers and promoters of these events may be A.A. members they consciously or unconsciously act for the interests of outside enterprises. In Great Britain, concerns over the accountability of conventions to the fellowship have been raised at the General Service Conference in 1995 and 2010, the Conferences recommending:

*"...that the practice of inviting speakers from overseas and paying their expenses is in breach of Traditions 4 & 12." To prevent misrepresentation, events organised outside of the service structure cannot use the AA name or logo\* or use the Confidential Directory as a mailing list."* (A.A. Service News, Winter, 2010:24)

In the USA, the recording of speakers has become a professional business. The following are excerpts from an A.A. member's questioning of this business, published in AA Grapevine, 2007.

*"...Some speakers are recorded without their knowledge or permission... ...One time, I walked into an AA convention where I was speaking and was surprised to see the taper set up with dozens of pre-made labels with my full name emblazoned on them. I told him to blot out my last name. He begrudgingly complied. No one on the committee had mentioned that they intended to record and sell my talk... ...Another time, I was seated on the dais as a banquet speaker during another AA convention. The tapers bustled about, setting up their recording system. Finally, I said, "Is anyone going to ask me if it's all right to record my talk?" They were perplexed by the question.*

*From time to time, I receive a telephone call from a convention program committee member asking me to submit a recording of my talk so they can review it before possibly inviting me to speak at their event. I always decline, politely explaining that I don't audition to speak at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.*

*Similarly, if we have to agree to be recorded before being invited to tell our AA stories, then Alcoholics Anonymous has lost its way. If I don't want my talk recorded, then that should be the end of it.*

*These days, I often see tapes and CDs displayed on the internet, at AA conventions, and in recovery stores that describe the speakers by category: Big Book Story, Celebrity, History, Old-Timer, Humorous, Great Talk, name of rock group, nom de plume, political position, name of television/movie character, etc. This is a perversion of the spirit of anonymity. Evidently, many audio recording businesses aren't familiar with the last page of the "A.A. Guidelines on Conferences, Conventions and Roundups" (available at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)), which makes suggestions about recording AA speakers, including, "The strength of our anonymity Traditions is reinforced by speakers who do not use their last names and by taping companies or tapers whose labels and catalogs do not identify speakers by last names, titles, service jobs or descriptions."*

*Some tapers act as "booking agents" for AA meetings, conventions, round-ups, and conferences. They're business people, and they recommend, as speakers, those whose recordings sell lots of copies: the polished, the sensational, the humorous, and the well-known. Generally, tapers won't recommend speakers who won't allow their talks to be recorded, because it's a bad business decision for them. Sadly, this means that we are not exposed to the full range of speakers in AA. I know many excellent speakers who have been passed over, even though they carry a tremendous message of recovery, unity, and service, because they prefer that their talks not be recorded... ...Moving away from the usual crowd of convention speakers is a good idea, too. I want to hear more people who don't want their talks to be recorded, who have absolutely no ambition to get on the AA speakers' circuit, who hem and haw, who get stuck in their drunkalogs for forty-five minutes, who speak from the heart and wander through the littered landscape of their lives in search of a point. I don't want to walk away from the AA meeting with a brand-new CD. I want to walk away from the AA meeting with an empty hand, a full heart, and a new twist on an old message that gives the recipient a big spiritual dividend - while no one realizes a dime in profit." ("Unrecorded A member questions the practice of recording AA speakers", AA Grapevine, August 2007, vol.64, No.3).*

According to White, *"Today's programs have access to an increasingly sophisticated menu of visual aids to enhance the intensity and effectiveness of addiction treatment. The addiction field has progressed from the early days in which video aids consisted of nothing more than "talking heads," to a state in which visual media constitute a powerful tool for behavioural and attitude change... ...The availability of high - quality visual media designed as tools for changing behaviors, attitudes, and values of addicted clients is increasing every day. Such aids, along with an increasing number of television specials and popular movies that address addiction and recovery (my Name*

*Is Bill W., Clean and Sober, When a Man Loves a Woman*), constitute powerful resources that can be utilized in addiction treatment... ..“Passive Confrontation” bypasses this defense system by presenting new information to a client while defences are minimally engaged. The use of reading assignments or assignments to watch certain movies or videos (while alone) takes the client out of the defense - activation interactional role and enhances receptivity to new information. It forces the information from an oppositional to an introspective arena. Visual media, when used in a treatment assignment context, can be a powerful vehicle for such passive confrontation” (White, 1996:333-335).

In light of the development of modern sophisticated thought reform programmes which bypass psychological defence mechanisms as a means of behaviour modification and control, the fellowship may need to evaluate whether it is wise to permit the recording of speakers at A.A. meetings and events. The practice of recording delegates (A.A. Service Manual, 2016:S54) may give some individual delegates undue influence within the fellowship lasting well beyond their term of office, contrary to the spirit of Traditions Two and Twelve. The threat posed to A.A. by celebrity speakers is clearly identified in A.A.’s Tradition Twelve. It was known to Bill W. and Dr. Bob well before the Traditions were written. After interviewing Bill W. and Dr. Bob in 1941, journalist Jack Alexander wrote “Because of the absence of figureheads and the fact that there is no formal body of belief to promote, they have no fears that Alcoholics Anonymous will degenerate into a cult.” (The Jack Alexander Article about A.A.:23). The presence of figureheads accompanied by reports of abusive cult-like behaviour in certain A.A. groups, suggests that some A.A. groups are degenerating into cults.

The threat posed to A.A. by celebrity speakers, audio tapes, books, sobriety chips and other commercial gimmicks parallels a similar threat posed to the Recovery Movement, identified by William White:

*“In the transition between social movement and industry, some movements become social/commercial phenomenon marked by celebrity speakers, books, journals, audiotapes, and innumerable movement icons. There is nothing inherently wrong with such trappings; they characterize the most successful of movements. But there is a danger that the soul of a movement can be corrupted by the crass commercialism that often marks the shift from movement to pop cultural phenomenon. The proliferation of such items in the 1980s led some to coin the term “recovery porn” to classify this genre of items whose intent was more one of making money than supporting recovery.”* (White, W., 2000:22).

While there may be nothing inherently wrong with commercialism, it is clear from A.A.’s early history, summarised in the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service, that combining A.A. with the commercial interests of any individual members, treatment facilities or other organisations, will eventually destroy the fellowship. It is also clear from earlier sections of this report that “recovery porn” targeted at A.A. members has already made some inroads into corrupting the fellowship.

## 10.8 The “Is A.A. a Cult?” debate

A.A. members in Great Britain may be aware that on the GSO website, one of the frequently asked questions by professionals is “Is A.A. a cult?” (A.A. (Great Britain), 2016a). The behaviour of certain individuals and groups in A.A. evidently gives this impression, otherwise the question would not arise. Allegations to support this view come from alcoholics who have encountered bad experiences through attending A.A. meetings. The question reached the national press in Great Britain in 1998 and 2015, in an article entitled “*Cult or Cure: the AA backlash*” which claimed that “*Those who have been through its mill claim it is ‘authoritarian’ and ‘fascistic’, employs brainwashing techniques and is cult-like in its attitude to members*” (Independent, 1998); and in an article entitled “*I was fresh meat, how some AA meetings push women into harmful dating*”: “*Some of the women I talked to called the groups cult-like, saying that members cling to the written word in the Big Book and exclude anyone who might question it, leaving them alone when they stumble across what is commonly known as “the 13th step” – that is, when someone makes sexual advances on someone new to recovery*” (Guardian, 2015). The current questioning of whether A.A. is a cult may have arisen because a proportion of A.A. members now draw their authority for how to work the A.A. programme and how to sponsor newcomers from various treatment 12-step programmes hybridised with Synanon TC/ Recovery Community values, rather than from A.A. Conference Approved literature. It may also have arisen because cults are focussing their recruitment activities in A.A., other 12-step fellowships, and in drug rehabilitation programmes (Tobias, Lalach 1994:50; Lalach, Tobias, 2006:91). There are A.A. members who draw their authority for how to work the A.A. programme and how to sponsor newcomers from various websites which are not A.A. websites. Cults, fundamentalist and extremist religious groups make sophisticated use of the Internet as a means of recruiting online (Hassan, 2013: xix, 220). According to Hassan, “*Today we face threats from destructive groups that*

*in the past we might not have labelled as cults, but these groups are wielding undue and destructive influence across the globe and across our technological platforms. I am especially worried about the dangers presented by the rise of fundamentalist and extremist religious groups and the increasingly malicious misuse of the Internet. These groups and others can get onto the web and have an immediate global audience. In order to combat this ability, we must also acquire a more global perspective, focussing on our mutual interdependence and our survival as a species and as keepers of our planet”* (Hassan, 2013:220).

The “Is A.A. a cult?” debate also appears in such publications as “*Alcoholic s Anonymous: Cult or Cure?*” (Bufe C., 1998; Independent, 1998), and criticism of the 12-step Recovery Movement, (Peele, 1995; Peele, Bufe, Brodsky, 2000) in which, 12-step treatment is confused with A.A., and Alcoholics Anonymous itself is erroneously seen as the driving force behind disease theory of addiction and 12-step coercion. Cited earlier in this report in Chapter 6, 12-step facilitation was initiated without consultation with Alcoholics Anonymous. Authorities in the field of cultic studies do not consider A.A. to be a cult, but rather beneficial in helping people with addiction to alcohol (Singer, 2003:197; Hassan, 2016). A.A. meetings or other 12-step meetings have been cited as being helpful to former cult members recovering from psychological and spiritual abuse, and who also have a problem with alcohol or another addiction (Lalich, Tobias, 2006:194; Langone, 1993:309-310,317; Tobias, Lalich, 9,10,227,239). However, they also give the following warning:

*“In cases where alcohol or substance abuse was or is a problem, attending meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous may help. However, we caution you to proceed into the 12-step world with your eyes open and your antennae up. Despite its successes, this is an area rife with abuses and incompetencies. Hustlers use 12-step programs as a hunting ground for income and glory. Some counselors and group leaders are not credentialed. Some programs are fronts for cults. Even a well-meaning program may inadvertently promote long-term victimization. Although these groups are set up to reduce codependency, many participants become completely dependent on their 12-step meetings and friends”* (Lalich, Tobias, 2006:194).

*“Prior emotional disorders or distress may increase vulnerability to cult recruitment and susceptibility to thought-reform programs. There are cults, for example, that focus their recruitment on individuals involved in drug rehabilitation programmes, or Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs, seeing this milieu as a ripe hunting ground for potential members”* (Tobias, Lalich 1994:50).

If A.A. is to remain viable in this fast moving digital age, some A.A. members, whatever their length of sobriety, will need to understand their vulnerability to thought-reform programs and recruitment into 12-step cults, whilst others must take on responsibility for good leadership described in Concept IX. As in the past, newcomers will need to be warned to treat all A.A. members, irrespective of their claimed length of sobriety, with what A.A. Co-founder Dr. Bob described as “*normal caution and precaution*”:

*“IN as large an organization as ours, we naturally have had our share of those who fail to measure up to certain obvious standards of conduct. They have included schemers for personal gain, petty swindlers and confidence men, crooks of various kinds and other human fallibles. Relatively their number has been small, much smaller than in many religious and social uplift organizations. Yet they have been a problem and not an easy one. They have caused many an A.A. to stop thinking and working constructively for a time. We cannot condone their actions, yet we must concede that when we have used normal caution and precaution in dealing with such cases, we may safely leave them to that Higher Power”* (Dr. Bob (1948, Akron, Ohio) ‘The Fundamentals in Retrospect’, AA Grapevine, September, 1948, Vol 5, No. 4).

Without A.A. members collectively taking responsibility, these schemers for personal gain, petty swindlers, confidence men and crooks of various kinds cannot safely be left to the dispensation of that Higher Power. They will continue to prey on the vulnerable and thereby ultimately destroy the fellowship.

# Chapter 11

## Conclusion

### 11.1 Conclusion

Recent decades have seen the increasing wholesale exploitation of Alcoholics Anonymous by medical professionals, commercial enterprises, religious groups, government institutions and by A.A. members themselves. True to the experience of A.A. Traditions, the professionalising of Twelve Step work has compromised A.A. unity and public relations. Authorities in the field of cultic studies warn that some cults are focussing their recruitment activities in drug rehabilitation, Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-Step fellowships, that the 12-Step industry is rife with abuse and incompetency.

The gravity of the situation which A.A. faces has already been summed up by Professor Zafiridis in “*Alcoholics and narcotics anonymous: A radical movement under threat*”:

“...Despite all this, the future of the AA and NA selfhelp groups is not yet determined. Everything depends on their choices. If the groups choose to preserve the principles and values which have led them, over the years, to such encouraging results, and if they realize that this course will entail conflict with the prevailing social and scientific attitudes, then they will succeed in safeguarding their genuinely valuable contribution. If, however, they continue to set aside their innovative characteristics, and eventually side with the dominant social perceptions and attitudes, then their credibility and their capacity to help individuals with an addiction problem will constitute nothing more than a glorious past. In other words, the question facing the AA and NA self-help groups is whether they can respond to the new reality that is currently shaped by: on the one hand, the contemporary socio-economic environment with its cultural superstructure, and, on the other, the range of internal problems which have been unidentified until now, but which are dialectically related to that same environment...” (Zafiridis, Lainas, 2012:101)

This report documents a brief history of the Synanon cult and its influence on Alcoholics Anonymous via the Therapeutic Communities (TC) Movement, Recovery Movement and Recovery Advocacy Movement, 1968-2017. The TC movement’s attempt to combine Synanon cult philosophy with the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps in an addiction treatment known as the *Recovery Model*, combined with the TC movement’s political influence in the fields of addiction treatment and the criminal justice system may explain A.A.’s stagnant growth in recent decades. Synanon, via the TC movement, continues to have significant impact on drug rehabilitation and prison reform. In the UK, TCs were integrated into the UK drug treatment system in the 1970s and for a short period of time enjoyed unparalleled influence in the development and direction of treatment approaches across the whole spectrum of services. The TC treatment models of *Recovery Management* and the *Recovery Oriented Integration System (ROIS)*, also known as *Recovery Orientated Systems of Care (ROSC)*, were recently integrated into the UK drug treatment system via a successful campaign by the *Recovery Advocacy Movement*. These systems intend to integrate Alcoholics Anonymous and other ‘mutual aid’ groups within TC treatment models. Although Synanon is regarded as a contribution to the understanding of addiction treatment (Zafiridis, 2011) it is also regarded as one of the USA’s more notorious cults, which left a legacy of abuse in an industry described as “*a tangled web of deception, fraud and conflicts of interest*” (Congress, 2008:2).

Since the mid-1970s the name Alcoholics Anonymous has become increasingly implicated alongside abusive cult-like TC programmes. In the 1980s/1990s the TC movement, Recovery Movement, and 12-Step industry in the USA came under increasing criticism concerning fraudulent, exploitative and unethical treatment and marketing

practices. Some TCs were recognised as having the appearance of some cults. During this period, A.A. in the USA and Canada lost their battle to protect the A.A. Circle and Triangle trademark, finally surrendering it to the industry in 1993. In response to public criticism and erosion of funding for addiction treatment in the 1990s, a new politically motivated recovery movement was formed in 2001, called the *Recovery Advocacy Movement*. Among the Recovery Advocacy Movement's campaigns are increased funding for drug courts and the TC movement's *Recovery Management* and *Recovery oriented integration system (ROIS)*, which intend to integrate Alcoholics Anonymous and other "mutual aid" groups within TC treatment models.

Synanon TC influence in A.A. was recorded in A.A. Grapevine 1968, under an editorial entitled "*Winds of Change.*" This reported new types of A.A. meeting opening across the USA, which combined Synanon encounter group philosophy with a harping back to the Oxford Group. Many people entering A.A. since 1968 may have been brainwashed in TC facilities and carried the notion of Synanon TC "tough love" into the fellowship. Others may have entered A.A. through more sophisticated brainwashing programmes of education and re-education, in which A.A. history has been deceptively re-written, and the A.A. programme narrowed to a "Big Book philosophy" whereby newcomers are treated as subordinates and the role of a sponsor corrupted into the mentoring and monitoring role of a TC mentor/teacher. Within this "Big Book philosophy" the other two thirds of the A.A. programme in the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service are ignored. "Big Book philosophy" may be diverse, or fundamentalist, depending on the teaching of the treatment centre. Many A.A. members may also be indoctrinated by the large amount of literature published by the 12-Step industry and on the Internet. The "*change*" oriented language of Therapeutic Communities has since evolved to "*Recovery*" oriented language.

Drug courts, coercion in the criminal justice system and disease theory of addiction are controversial issues. According to A.A. Traditions they ought to be outside issues. A.A. has drawn itself into public controversy by incorporating the signing of court, probation, and employer slips within the A.A. service structure. Some critics of the 12 Step industry view A.A. as the driving force behind disease theory of addiction and coercion in the criminal justice system. Evidence suggests some coerced newcomers are put off A.A. because they view A.A. as part of the penal system. In some areas, the flooding of A.A. groups with coerced newcomers has destabilised the groups concerned.

The fellowship of A.A. has become confused with a coercive institutional 12-Step treatment and with a politically motivated TC/Recovery movement which deceptively markets its philosophical origins as being in Alcoholics Anonymous. The roots of the TC Movement, Recovery Movement and Recovery Advocacy Movements, can be traced back to the Synanon cult, various psychiatrists and institutions in the field of addiction treatment, combined with violations of A.A. Traditions. Though some of these institutions may have been founded by A.A. members, or employ them, for the industry or historians to claim that these movements have their roots in Alcoholics Anonymous and imply that Dr. Bob and Bill W. were the founders of these movements is fallacious. Yet Recovery Advocates promote this idea along with promoting 12 step facilitation therapy, so-called "Big Book philosophy" and the TC movement's *Recovery Orientated Integration System (ROIS)*. Whilst these movements and institutions may claim to have a similar aim to A.A., their methods in achieving that aim are built upon opposing principles.

In order for the fellowship to avoid this confusion, which poses a threat to the viability of A.A., the fellowship as a whole will need to withdraw its present policy of cooperating with the TC movement's Recovery Orientated Integration System (ROIS) and also treatment facilities and other organisations which link their activities to the registered trademark name *Alcoholics Anonymous*; and shift its public, and internal, relations policy back to Traditions and the General Warranties of Conference:

*"...Privately, however, we can inform Tradition-violators that they are out of order. When they persist, we can follow up by using such other resources of persuasion as we may have, and these are often considerable. Manifested in this fashion, a persistent firmness will often bring the desired result. In the long run, though, we shall have to rely mainly on the pressures of A.A. opinion and public opinion. And to this end we shall need to maintain a continuous education of public communications channels of all kinds concerning the nature and purpose of our Traditions. Whenever and however we can, we shall need to inform the general public also; especially upon misuses of the name Alcoholics Anonymous. This combination of counter forces can be very discouraging to violators or would-be violators. Under these conditions they soon find their deviations to be unprofitable and unwise..."* (Concept XII, Warranty Five; The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service).

Had the fellowship enacted this warranty in 1993, A.A. might have retained its Circle and Triangle trademark; twenty four years on, it stands to lose its identity.

The maxim "Let's Be Friendly With Our Friends" does not extend to allowing other organisations to link their activities to the A.A. name. Ultimately the fellowship will need to press the medical profession and addiction



treatment industry to stop misusing the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps as an addiction treatment. They may make use of A.A. principles, but not link those principles to the A.A. name:

“...We have a saying that “A.A. is prepared to give away all knowledge and all the experience it has - all except the A.A. name itself. “We mean by this that our principles can be used in any application whatever. We do not wish to make them a monopoly of our own. We simply request that the public use of the A.A. name be avoided by those other agencies who wish to avail themselves of A.A. techniques and ideas. In case the A.A. name should be misapplied in such a connection it would of course be the duty of our General Service Conference to press for the discontinuance of such practice...”(Concept XII, Warranty Five; The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service).

It will be the duty of Conference and the General Service Board to inform the fellowship, health professionals and the general public that some cults are focusing their recruitment activities in Alcoholics Anonymous. Some victims of psychological abuse after recruitment may later develop severe mental health problems which require specialist counselling with a practitioner accredited in this field. Some individual sponsors and A.A. groups are following corrupt interpretations of the A.A. programme. A.A. members and groups ought to be treated with caution and precaution.

Generally A.A. members who have joined the fellowship since 1968 will need to question whether they have been following the A.A. programme, or whether they have been following corrupt interpretations published by TCs, Hazelden, various other treatment centres and organisations which are targeting A.A. members.

Sophisticated brainwashing programmes, also known as thought reform, mind control, coercive persuasion, and behaviour modification are now used by organisations which one would not associate as being cults or extremist groups. These programmes can induce a person’s mindless, automatic compliance to the wishes of the manipulating individuals or organisations without them being aware that they are being controlled. Such programmes have been employed in attempts to control and indoctrinate individuals, societal groups (e.g., intellectuals), and even entire populations. There is a danger that A.A. groups will continue to adopt the language, values and characteristics of non-residential 12-Step TCs or recovery communities, whether these be fundamentalist in nature, or diverse.

In line with A.A. Traditions, that “*Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional*” this report recommends that A.A. members who are employed as professional or paraprofessional workers in the field of addiction treatment, or who have past careers in this field, or who are, or have been, engaged in Twelve Step recovery related enterprise, should not be eligible for election to A.A. service positions.

Vigilance and caution needs to be exercised also, in electing non-alcoholic trustees in cases where a trustee’s career in the criminal justice system or addiction treatment may present a conflict of interest.

Clearly what is needed in A.A. service is not experience in the fields of addiction and criminal justice, but a working knowledge of A.A. Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service, combined with integrity and willingness to act as guardians of the fellowship.

This report recommends a review of all A.A. General Service Conference Approved books, pamphlets and guidelines published since 1968 and withdrawal of those which contain material that is contrary to the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service.

This report recommends the fellowship urges the medical profession and addiction treatment industry to stop misusing the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps as an addiction treatment.

## 11.2 Bibliography/Suggested Reading

### ‘Core’ A.A. Literature

*‘Big Book’ Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th, ed., A.A. World Services Inc., New York  
[http://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/alcoholics-anonymous](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/alcoholics-anonymous)

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* A.A. World Services Inc., New York  
[http://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/twelve-steps-and-twelve-traditions](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/twelve-steps-and-twelve-traditions)

*The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service*, A.A. World Services Inc., New York  
[http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/en\\_bm-31.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bm-31.pdf)

*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of A.A.*, A.A. World Services Inc., New York

*The Language of the Heart: Bill W.’s Grapevine Writings*, AA Grapevine Inc., New York

*A.A. Tradition How It Developed*, A.A. World Services Inc., New York  
[http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/p-17\\_AATraditions.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-17_AATraditions.pdf)

*Problems Other Than Alcohol*, A.A. World Services Inc., New York  
[http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/P-35\\_ProOtherThanAlcohol.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/P-35_ProOtherThanAlcohol.pdf)

*The Jack Alexander Article About A.A.*, A.A. World Services Inc., New York  
[http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/p-12\\_theJackAlexArticle.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-12_theJackAlexArticle.pdf)

*“Suppose, for instance, that, during the last twenty-five years, AA had never published any standard literature - no books, no pamphlets. We need little imagination to see that by now our message would be hopelessly garbled. Our relations with medicine and religion would have become a shambles. To alcoholics generally we would today be a joke and the public would have thought us a riddle. Without its literature, AA would certainly have bogged down in a welter of controversy and disunity”* - Bill W., May, 1964.(*The Language of the Heart*:349).

### Recovery from Cults and Abusive Relationships

*Cults In Our Midst: The Continuing Fight Against Their Hidden Menace*, Magaret Thaler Singer, 2003, Jossey-Bass

*Captive Hearts, Captive Minds: Freedom and Recovery from Cults and Abusive Relationships*, Tobias, M., Lalich, J., 1994, Hunter House

*Take Back Your Life: Recovering from Cults and Abusive Relationships*, Lalich J., Tobias M., 2006 , Bay Tree Publishing.

*Combatting Cult Mind Control*, Hassan, S., 1990, Park Street Press

*Recovery From Cults: Help For Victims of Psychological and Spiritual Abuse*, Langone, M. (Ed.), 1993, W. W. Norton & Co., New York & London.

### Drug Courts/ Court Mandated Attendance

*Judging Addicts: Drug Courts and Coercion in the Justice System*, Tiger, R., 2013, New York University Press, New York and London.

*Resisting 12-Step Coercion: How to Fight Forced Participation in AA, NA, or 12-Step Treatment*, Peele, S., Bufe. C., Brodsky, A., 2000, See Sharp Press.

**How to Avoid being Conned by Salesmen, Saleswomen and Politicians within and outside A.A.**  
*Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Cialdini R., 2007, Revised Ed., Harper-Collins

**History of the Recovery Movement and A.A. post *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age***  
*The Language of the Heart: A Cultural History of the Recovery Movement from Alcoholics Anonymous to Oprah Winfrey*, Travis, T., 2009, University of North Carolina University Press

*Help At Any Cost: How the Troubled-Teen Industry Cons Parents and Hurts Kids*, Szalavitz M., 2006, Riverhead Books, New York

### **Constructive Criticism of Hybrid Recovery-AA**

Alcoholics and narcotics anonymous: A radical movement under threat, Zafiridis, P., Lainas, S., 2012, *Addiction Research and Theory*, 20(2), 93-104

[http://www.researchgate.net/publication/232038226\\_Alcoholics\\_and\\_narcotics\\_anonymous](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/232038226_Alcoholics_and_narcotics_anonymous)

*I'm Dysfunctional You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and other Self - Help Fashions*, Kaminer, W., 1992, Addison-Wesley

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*Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?* Bufe, C., 1998, 2nd ed., See Sharp Press

### **History of the Synanon Cult**

*The Light On Synanon, How a country weekly exposed a corporate cult- and won the Pulitzer Prize*, Mitchell, D., Mitchell, C., Ofshe R., 1980, Seaview Books

*Escape, My Lifelong War Against Cults*, Morantz, P., 2013, Cresta Publications

*From Miracle to Madness: The True Story of Charles Dederich and Synanon*, Morantz, P., 2015, 2nd Ed., Cresta Publications

The Cult That Spawned the Tough-Love Teen Industry, Szalavitz, M., 2007 *motherjones.com*

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/08/cult-spawned-tough-love-teen-industry>

*Help At Any Cost: How the Troubled-Teen Industry Cons Parents and Hurts Kids*, Szalavitz M., 2006, Riverhead Books, New York

## Chapter 12

# A.A.'s 'Final Great Decision'

From the contents of this report the reader will have gained some inclination of the tough time the guardians of A.A. in the United States have had in resisting an extraordinary commercial pressure on A.A. from treatment centres, publishers and novelty manufacturers, combined with political incentives which overwhelm A.A. meetings in some areas with people who don't want to be there, through 12-step facilitation and drug court mandated attendance. They have thus far, been fighting a losing battle to protect A.A. copyrights from the 'army' outside and the Trojan Horse within. While some might think A.A. is in decline, this troubled time may yet turn out to be A.A.'s finest hour. An hour of awakening in which future historians might one day record that Alcoholics Anonymous finally, *came to mature*. Evidently it has not done so yet. This section of the report takes a look at the challenges A.A. faces from a different angle: from the point of growth of the A.A. World Service structure, communication and unity of Alcoholics Anonymous worldwide.

AA member estimates in 2013 showed approximately 57% of A.A. groups, and 67% of AA members were in USA/Canada, 43% of A.A. groups and 33% of AA members were outside USA/Canada (1). A number of countries outside USA/Canada have developed service structures with General Service Conferences and General Service offices (G.S.O.s). There were 63 national G.S.Os worldwide in 2013 (1). AA membership estimates for Australia are 20,000, (2) India, 30,000,(3) and Great Britain 34,000(4). There are estimated to be approximately 140 million people suffering alcohol dependence worldwide (5) of which, 18 million are the USA.(6) More people die from the harmful use of alcohol each year, (2.5 million)(7) than there are AA members in total (2.1 million)(1) The total AA membership of 2.1 million in 2013 represented approximately 1.5% of the entire world population suffering from alcohol dependency. With a global population of 140 million alcoholics, and if A.A. continues to grow outside USA/Canada, then it is likely that the worldwide A.A. membership will exceed that of USA/Canada in the near future. In the grand scheme of the global field of alcoholism, world history and global organisations, Alcoholics Anonymous is still a relatively small and young organisation, yet to reach its first century and yet to complete what Bill W. called "*Our Final Great Decision*." This he envisaged to be a General Service Conference securely linked to other similar General Service Conferences around the world.

### 'Our Final Great Decision' - Bill W.

*"... We who have anxiously watched our infant Conference take its first steps, and have seen it acquire form, substance and strength, are today utterly confident. We believe that our Conference, when securely linked to similar Conferences in every distant land, can guarantee, absolutely, the survival, unity, and functioning of AA throughout the world. We feel the deep assurance that this new beacon light of service can endure every storm and peril that the passage of the years may cast upon us..."* ('Our Final Decision' The Language of the Heart, p. 137).

### 'What Is the Third legacy?' -Bill W.

*"...Though the Conference might later be enlarged to include the whole world, we felt that the first delegates should come from the United States and Canada only..."* – Bill W. ('What Is the Third legacy?' The Language of the Heart p. 163).

### 'AA Around the World' 2010.

*"In November 1967, Bill wrote to representatives of A.A. in several countries in Europe, Central and South America, and South Africa, initially proposing "that A.A. take first steps toward forming a world service conference." Bill saw many problems of growth and communication that could benefit from an international exchange of experiences - problems of public relations, anonymity, self-support, relations with medicine and religion - problems all keenly felt in many A.A. countries. Printing and distribution of literature was another area Bill felt could best be improved by a worldwide exchange of experiences and policies. "As a beginning," Bill wrote, "I propose a World Service Meeting - not a conference, since it would not be fully representative of world A.A." Bill's ideas were enthusiastically approved by representatives of the countries that received the letter, and planning for the first World Service Meeting began."* ('A.A. Around the World,' Winter 2010)(8).

### **Original Conference Charter-1955 (North American Section)**

2. Composition *"...Other sections of the Conference may sometimes be created in foreign lands as the need arises out of language and geographical considerations. The North American Section of the General Service Conference will then become the senior section, related to the other Sections by ties of mutual consultation and cross linking of Delegates. But no Conference Section shall ever be placed in authority over another. All joint action shall be taken only upon two - thirds vote of the combined sections. Only matters seriously affecting A.A.'s worldwide needs shall be the subject of joint consideration"* (The AA Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, Appendix A) (9).

It can be understood that in the event of a major crisis affecting Alcoholics Anonymous worldwide, that delegates at USA/Canada Conference and the General Service Board no longer have the support of a reliable cross-section of AA group opinion with voting power. 43% of AA group opinion is not represented by elected delegates with power to vote on world affairs at the USA/Canada General Service Conference. The Conference only represents a cross-section of USA/Canada AA group opinion, representing 57% of the whole.

Because of worldwide growth of the fellowship, the USA/Canada conference has ceased to represent the *"actual voice and effective conscience for our whole society"* (Concept II). Important decisions which may affect A.A. worldwide, for example, the direction and policy of the General Service Board, AA World Services Inc. and A.A. Grapevine Inc., cannot be reached by substantial unanimity with less than a two thirds majority of the AA groups worldwide being represented by delegates with voting power, nor might such decisions be made by an adequately informed group conscience without inclusion of a cross section of the 43% of world AA group opinion not yet represented at the Conference. The General Warranties of Conference cannot be upheld. In the near future the USA/Canada Conference may only represent a minority opinion. A concentration of power in a minority could become the seat of *perilous power* (Concept XII).

At present, communication of the ultimate authority in Tradition Two is divided worldwide. The expression of A.A. group conscience heads up to a number of disconnected national General Service Conferences around the world. There is no direct linkage between these conferences via delegates with power to vote at the USA/Canada Conference. Therefore, channels to communicate the power of the spiritual entity of Alcoholics Anonymous *"...but one ultimate authority - a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience"* (10) are yet to be opened and united in one worldwide expression. In a new world of global communication and economic power, the old adage *"united we stand, divided we fall"* may apply to the future of Alcoholics Anonymous if national General Service Conferences are not soon directly connected with their centre of communication in the USA/Canada Conference. It may be seen from the contents of this minority report, the loss of AA's Circle and Triangle trademark in USA/Canada to outside enterprises, the conference advisory actions and reports of disunity in some areas of the fellowship, that globally, the ultimate authority in Tradition Two, a loving God *"...as he may express himself in our group conscience"* is losing power against an internationally spread and organised *"tyranny of very small minorities invested with absolute power"* (Concept V).

It can be seen from the above articles that progress has been made toward Alcoholics Anonymous developing a *"world service conference to be securely linked to other similar conferences in every distant land."* The first stage of development was the formation of *"our infant Conference in 1955"* with *"the first delegates coming from the United States and Canada only"* with Bill W.'s view that the Conference *"might later be enlarged to include the whole world."* Then there was the formation of the World Service Meeting. Bill W. initially proposing in 1967, *"that A.A. take first steps toward forming a world service conference"*, stating that: *"As a beginning ... I propose a World Service Meeting"*. Until such time as our Conference completes the third step in *Our Final Great Decision*, and

is “*securely linked to other similar Conferences in every distant land*”, the survival, unity, and functioning of AA throughout the world cannot be guaranteed.

*‘Our lives have depended upon communication. Our unity depends on communication. Our functioning depends on communication. This Conference is a great network of communication... ..Our Twelve Steps probably won’t change. Our Twelve Traditions? Not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for service - - let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, for ever’* – Bill W. (AA In Action, The Conference Report, AA Grapevine, July 1960).

This A.A. minority suggests the fellowship considers that the USA/Canada General Service Conference now assumes responsibility to undertake the role and function of the World General Service Conference: “*the collective conscience of our whole fellowship*” (Concept I) by permitting the 43% of AA groups outside USA/Canada to assume their responsibility under Concept I and thereby grant them their ‘*Right of Participation*’ in Concept IV. In order to achieve this, it is suggested that the present number of 93 elected area delegates forming two thirds of the USA/Canada General Service Conference (11) be increased to include area delegates with voting rights from countries where there is an A.A. membership who have established a national service structure, General Service Conference, and G.S.O. That national General Service Conferences outside USA/Canada be expanded to include the delegate(s) elected to the World General Service Conference (These to provide the delegated communication link between the Conferences, as exists between service levels elsewhere in the service structure, for example, General Service Representatives (G.S.R.s); area or regional delegates/representatives). If it is not practical to expand the USA/Canada Conference to accommodate international delegates from overseas, then the formation of a new World General Service Conference, held separately to the USA/Canada Conference could solve this problem.

The World Service Meeting to continue to function alongside the World General Service Conference, linking communication between service boards, G.S.Os, and reporting to the world Conference and national Conferences.

This relatively minor change to the Alcoholics Anonymous World Service Structure in order to accommodate worldwide growth and inclusion would restore ultimate authority in Tradition Two as demonstrated in the Twelve Concepts for World Service; that “*The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.*”(Concept I) and article 2 of the Original Conference Charter - 1955, that “*The North American Section of the General Service Conference will then become the senior section, related to the other Sections by ties of mutual consultation and cross linking of Delegates. But no Conference Section shall ever be placed in authority over another. All joint action shall be taken only upon two-thirds vote of the combined sections*”(11).

### **Guardian of AA: Our General Service Conference - Bill W.**

*“Someday we may have to resist all the pressure that a destruction bent world can put upon us in this craziest and most perilous century that the human race has ever seen. As a Fellowship, we shall always need to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to insure AA’s unity, service, and survival under any conditions whatever”* - Bill W. (‘Guardian of AA: Our General Service Conference’ The Language of the Heart p.166).

### **Let’s Keep It Simple But How? – Bill W.**

*“When our first General Service Conference met in 1951, we again drew a long breath. For some, this event spelled sheer disaster. Wholesale brawling and politicking would now be the rule. Our worst traits would get out in front. The serenity of the Trustees and everybody else would be disturbed (as indeed it sometimes was!). Our beautiful spirituality and the AA therapy would be interfered with. People would get drunk over this (and indeed a few did!). As never before, the shout went up, “For God’s sake, let’s keep this thing simple!” Cried some members, “Why can’t Dr. Bob and Bill and the Trustees go right on running those services for us? That’s the only way to keep it simple... ..Nobody stopped to think that there would soon be less than a handful of old-timers left; that they soon would be gone, too. The trustees would be quite isolated and unconnected with the Fellowship they served. The first big gale could bowl them over. AA would suffer heart failure at its vital center. Irretrievable collapse would be the almost certain result. Therefore we AAs had to make a choice: what would really be the simpler? Would we get that General Service Conference together, despite its special expense and perils? Or, would we sit on our hands at home, awaiting the fateful consequences of our fear and folly? What, in the long run, we wondered, would really be the better –and therefore the simpler? As our history shows, we took action.”* - Bill W. (‘Let’s Keep It Simple But How?’ The Language of the Heart p. 306).

## Chapter Twelve References

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2. Alcoholics Anonymous Australia website
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7. World Health Organization: 'Global Status Report on Alcoholism 2011' *"The harmful use of alcohol results in approximately 2.5 million deaths each year, with a net loss of life of 2.25 million..."*
8. 'AA Around the World', winter 2010
9. A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, Appendix A
10. Tradition Two
11. The Original Conference Charter -1955 (North American Section), Article 2. Composition, The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, Appendix A,

# Appendices



## Appendix A

# Synanon Cult Influence on A.A. - AA Grapevine Articles 1968-1975

The following articles may be viewed at the AA Grapevine Digital Archive, which contains all AA Grapevine articles written in the international journal since it was first published in 1944 <http://da.aagrapevine.org/>

**“Winds of Change” AA Grapevine, March 1968, Vol. 24, No. 10**

### **“New kinds of AA meetings**

*THIRTY-THREE years ago, when AA’s co-founders, Bill and Dr. Bob, met, it was an Oxford Group member who put them in touch. The earliest meetings of what was later to be called Alcoholics Anonymous were intimately connected with the meetings of the Oxford Group, religious pioneers of the day, who stressed honest disclosure about oneself to one’s peers in the “group” as an essential step toward change of character and correction of troublesome behavior patterns.*

*As AA grew, it became more independent of the Oxford Group influence (although, as Bill W. has acknowledged, the influence on AA of an Oxford Group leader, the Rev. Canon Samuel Shoemaker, continued to be deep and pervasive for years). AA meetings as we know them today began to take shape. Since then, it has been traditional that in AA talks and at discussion meetings certain kinds of self-revelation are out of bounds. Evidently, in the early days of the Fellowship, among the small groups of members who knew each other intimately, the need for complete honesty with at least some others was fulfilled by private conversations. This remains true for some AAs in some circumstances today. But there has grown up a tendency, even allowing for the Fifth Step, for many AAs to attempt a spiritual life based on new principles without anything like adequate elimination of “old ideas” and the behavior that resulted from them.*

*Understandably, then, there is within AA growing pressure to discover new ways to resolve those emotional and spiritual problems which result from hanging on to old ideas and from continued entrapment in habitual misbehavior. Three articles in this issue, on the next eight pages, illustrate that pressure. We predict that there will be more such articles in future Grapevines. There is exciting ferment today in the fields of psychology and psychiatry; in more than one center of learning and research there is a new willingness to study and adopt methods of character change based on the spiritual principles of rigorous honesty and full responsibility for one’s life and behavior. AA’s thirty-three years’ experience is proving a vital model for these studies. The AA demonstration is incontrovertible: Hundreds of thousands of alcoholics have found a way out of deadly addiction through spiritual action. Turnabout, AA is certain to gain—is already gaining—new vigor and insight as it proves willing to learn from those workers in related disciplines who are exploring and extending the techniques of spiritual recovery and regeneration as they apply to many different kinds of psychophysical inadequacy.*

*The Editors”*

“Tenth/twelfth Step Meetings

**We are not here to talk about...inventory; we're here to do the taking.**

SEVEN people, five men and two women, sit in a circle in a living room behind closed doors.

The leader speaks: "Since Joe is here for the first time, let me explain how this meeting runs. This is basically a Tenth and Twelfth Step meeting. Each of us is here to do three things: first, take an inventory of how he is doing in his practice of the program; second, invite the rest of the group to help him with the inventory by pulling him up in areas where he is off the beam but doesn't see it; and third, tell the group what he is going to do, with God's help, to put right what he has been doing wrong.

"There is no limitation on rough language. We say what is to be said the best way we can, whether four-letter words are involved or not. Just one caution—don't use this freedom to show off or make the ladies blush. No one is going to be impressed."

The leader continues, "The one basic rule of this meeting is that we stick to the principle of rigorous honesty with ourselves and with each other. There are twenty-three hours in the day for being nice. In this hour, we drop that. Not that anyone here is trying to put anyone else down. Quite the contrary. In this recovery game, it is possible literally to kill with too much of the wrong type of kindness. All of us are sick in the same way, and we all share the symptom of being hardened, long-time self-kidders.

"We've heard it said that the first principle in recovery is learning to get honest with ourselves. Well, this meeting is a means to that end. We have found that, especially in the tough areas—sex is one for me—we often don't get the necessary degree of self-honesty without the help of friends in this program who love us enough to tell us specifically where, how, and why we are full of baloney. Also, we have found that, as experienced self-conners, we too easily tune out one person who tries to pull us up. We resort to some such monkey business as 'Yes, but he doesn't understand. I'm different.' But when three or four move in together and pull us up, it's harder for the monkey to cop a plea. We have a chance to face and accept a tough truth that we would otherwise have ducked—at the cost, very possibly, of our sanity, sobriety, and lives."

*The leader ends his opening remarks by saying: "A couple of final points: There are no observers in this meeting; everyone here is here to participate. What is said in this room stays here; some of it will be rough. We are not here to talk about how to take inventory; we're here to do the taking. Finally, and most important, this process is spiritual surgery and God is the surgeon. It's God as we understand Him, all right, but it is, nevertheless, God. Truth is one of the oldest names for the Higher Power. We are trying to find out the truth about ourselves, however tough that truth may turn out to be, in the confidence that, if we do our job thoroughly and sincerely, we will begin, as the Big Book says, to discover that self-will has blocked us off from Him. As a result of what we do here (to consult the Big Book again), our spiritual beliefs will begin to grow more into a spiritual experience. Spiritual growth through such awakening is what this meeting is aiming at, and the rough language and loud voices should never make us forget that."*

*The meeting starts. The leader begins by discussing his own situation. Then he invites the rest of the group to comment on what he has said or any ways they have noticed him fouling up. One of the group may, for example, point out self-pity in something he said. Another touches on his selfishness in a difficult personal relationship that he discussed. Their comments are specific. After some discussion, the leader decides to make a moral contract with the group to follow a certain course of action in the difficult relationship and to spend time during his daily Eleventh Step work asking knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out in that situation.*

Then it's someone else's turn to discuss himself. He has a resentment which he tries to justify. The whole group lands on him. At first he bristles, but after a while he begins to see where he was hung up and how to get clear.

One by one, the seven discuss their own problems, confusions, and shortcomings, open themselves up to the group, and tell the group what they are going to do about the areas where they are falling down. The circle is completed in an hour and twenty minutes. The meeting is closed with the Lord's Prayer.

I have been sitting in on meetings like this for three and a half months now. They have added a depth to my sobriety, sanity, and spiritual growth which were never previously in the picture, despite the fact that I went into them with over two years of AA sobriety under my belt. In just these three-plus short months, I have seen these meetings have the same deeply positive effect on many lives other than my own.

*In addition to saying that I lack the power to communicate just how helpful and great I think these meetings are, I'd like to say a couple of things by way of clarifying what they are and what they aren't. First, they are not, I repeat not, group therapy. They are God and group (in that order) therapy—and, believe me, that's a far different kind*

of animal. Second, there is really nothing new about them. They hark back directly to the practice of the first AA members. In that sense, they represent a renewal of the early spirit of the movement. For me, they have acted as an antidote for the tendencies to which many of us are susceptible as members of a Fellowship which is now thirty-two years old and has a large membership and a good press. The tendencies are to get stodgy and "respectable," to apologize for God and the Steps, and to avoid an unsophisticated, head-on approach in carrying the message. Just such an approach, the Higher Power, and the Steps are the very things that made AA work in the beginning and, I believe, still make it work today.

T. P. Jr.

Hankins, New York"

**"40-hour Marathon Meetings" AA Grapevine, March 1968, Vol. 24, No. 10**

***". . .The long hours in marathon bid fair to open the heart. . .***

*IT'S EASY to assume that we aren't going to see much change in the AA way of doing business in years to come.*

*There are signs this is much too easy an assumption.*

*From the East Coast and the West Coast come separate reports[1] of a new kind of small, intense AA meeting, not confined to AA members, but including anyone who will abide by the rules of the meeting. The purpose of these meetings is self-inventory: how I am doing now. They are either Fifth Step or Tenth Step meetings, or both, and they are designed to furnish a place for in-depth disclosure of the difficulties members may be having in working the program—practicing these AA principles in all our affairs. Frank talk by others at the meeting helps me to take my inventory. I'm expected to come out of the meeting with a commitment to shape up, to change my behavior, or to do something about one or more Steps of the program where I'm remiss.*

*The main emphasis is on truth—the whole truth, not the abridged version which has become expected and appropriate at AA open meetings. Ah, you say, that's all very well, but you surely don't mean the whole truth, do you? Sex, perversions included. Thefts. Slanders. The really nasty stuff?*

*Evidently those proposing the new meetings do mean just that: the whole truth, including all the etceteras, as corrective for an AA which is tending to become conventional, even evasive. They propose the whole truth as a resource especially for those with a terrible burden of guilt which they can no longer lay down in public in AA.*

*As one reads the history of AA, it seems evident that in the beginning, among the close, small groups of the first days, any guilt could be unloaded. The price for freedom from the guilt was willingness to change, willingness to stop doing whatever was producing the guilt—starting with stopping drinking.*

*As time has gone on, AA members have laid down the guilts associated with drinking in their open-meeting tales. They have laid down the guilts of the rest of their lives in the Fifth Step—if they have taken the Fifth Step. Many AAs haven't really taken it—ever. People who slip a lot show up deficient in this area especially, it seems. And all too often, those who have taken a solitary Fifth Step with AA sponsor or spiritual adviser have returned to a former pattern of guilt-making behavior. They have not used the AA group to help them keep from that return. After all, the group doesn't know about the misbehavior, so how could it in any way help?*

*The new meetings are designed to put all those participating in them in a position to furnish real help to a member wanting to change. The group is going to ask him for a commitment to stop whatever he is doing wrong, and it will expect him to report back regularly to the group on progress—admitting failure, without breast-beating, when he has failed.*

*You're alarmed, you say? This is much too much invasion of privacy by the group? Not so. Remember, one is a member of the group by free choice. One is in the group precisely to get the help the group offers. One wants to change. One wants to be shut of, say, a sex hang-up, or a crippling anxiety. But solo efforts have failed. Now we try the group.*

*These truth-centered Fifth/Tenth Step meetings can furnish real help. The whole program is involved: Greater Power in the Third, Seventh, and Eleventh Steps; help from others in the sharing of experience, strength, and hope; self-help in the willingness to go into the meetings prepared to tell the truth about myself, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.*

*The quintessence of the new kind of meetings is the "marathon." Evidently the idea for these comes most directly and recently from the programs for narcotics addicts called Synanon and Daytop. Both of these came out of AA,*

as a matter of historical development, but they are changed in important ways from the original AA program. The parentage is still evident, however, and nowhere more so than in the appeal to rigorous honesty. The climate of Synanon and Daytop, as best one can tell from reports and from minimal direct exposure, is much closer to the tone and intention of the fifth chapter of AA's Big Book than are most AA meetings today. While AA has waxed genteel, and eager to avoid discussion of unpleasant truths, drug addicts are willing—indeed obliged—to go to any lengths of honesty to be rid of their sociopathic or psychopathic behavior patterns. Thus the marathon—forty hours of continuous meeting with a five-hour sleep-break halfway through. In two experiences of mine—one in a non-AA and one in an AA setting—thirty-five hours has proved barely sufficient for the "Fifth Steps" of some sixteen people assembled for the adventure. Marathons, unexpectedly, do not prove physically exhausting. One gets a second wind after eight or ten hours. (Food is provided at regular mealtimes.)

You get out of a marathon what you put in. If you put in the truth about your hang-ups, you get out relief and insight, and new power, through God, to do something about what is most troublesome in your own behavior. If you block, and conceal, and choose to talk trivialities and generalities, instead of the truth of past and present feelings and deeds, you get little enough, although perhaps it is impossible not to gain something from so intensive a sharing by at least some of the others. There is much more to be said about these marathon Fifth Steps, but my own experience indicates that it is best not to attempt a travelogue, but to settle for urging others merely to try the trip. Somewhere in the area of the marathon, a vital new tool for sobriety and real sanity is being forged. (Or perhaps it would be better to say that an old tool is being restored to us?)

The most promising purpose for marathons which has turned up so far is in trying to blast loose the ice that has formed at the heart of the long-term slipper, the seasoned AA failure, whose hope for himself has congealed, and whose idea of himself is layered over with self-deception. For this chap, as for so many with extra, major hang-ups beyond alcohol (sex is the most obvious one that comes to mind), the long hours in marathon bid fair to open the heart in a flood of powerful emotion. One can come very near to God under these circumstances as one comes near to one's fellow human beings in trusting and honest self-revelation.

1\*See Pages 6 and 9 –Ed.

Anonymous”

**“Around AA - Items of AA Information and Experience” AA Grapevine, March 1968, Vol. 24 No. 10**

### **“Bootstrap Operations**

One way or another, hundreds of thousands of people have discovered that the kindness they show others anonymously, without any thought of a reward or even, frequently, thanks, is like a boomerang when well thrown. It returns happiness, not in the bland terms of our TV and newspaper-column purveyors of homespun philosophy, but by peace of mind and soul that leads one to discover a purpose for living. This is the only kind of happiness we know that is not a mere sense of euphoria, as short-lived as it is artificial.

These experiences of these people, some of them in the service professions like social work and the ministry, some of them part of bootstrap operations like Alcoholics Anonymous and Synanon, some of them just ordinary traffic cops, bus conductors, doctors, lawyers, or Indian chiefs, demonstrate that the new morality of self-indulgence (which is really the absence of any morality) is at the outset a sheer fraud; that the older program of virtue for its own sake is far more difficult to follow but much more rewarding in the end.

John Mulholland and George N.”

**“Fifth Step Meetings” AA Grapevine, March 1968, Vol. 24, No. 10**

### **“Small groups...laying it on the line with each other. Nothing held back...”**

I'VE HAD the good fortune to hear Bill W. speak on several occasions. Each time, I have detected a note of wistfulness when he was recounting his experiences in the early days. Small groups of five or six, laying it on the line with each other. Nothing held back, a real eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation. Perhaps this is one of the reasons AA grew slowly at first. Being that honest isn't easy, even in a small group.

Now, for the most part, at least in my area, groups are large, even the closed ones. For the timid and tender,

*this is not a climate conducive to the disclosure in depth many of us have need of. As a sponsor during my "phony years," I was incapable of giving many a newcomer what he sought. I could only model the clothes that fit—suggesting he go to many meetings, read the Big Book, talk with other members, etc. The cloak of honesty was not a part of my wardrobe, so how could I possibly display it? I had no firsthand experience with this sort of coaching, either. I had to learn my lesson the hard way.*

*Both speaker and participation meetings are fine for the purpose of identification. Discussion and study groups are primarily concerned with learning what to do and "how it works." Mostly, this talk is confined to generalities, with precious few specific disclosures in depth. By and large, most of the time is spent recounting "what I was like, what happened, and what I'm like now." With a few notable exceptions, ninety-five percent of this time is devoted to what I was like, three percent to what happened, and two percent to what I'm like now (assuming, of course, that any change has occurred beyond hanging up the dipper). It quite often winds up with something to the effect that "And then I came to AA," with the intent to convey that all is now peachy-dandy. True, the new person may have been able to identify; he may get further encouragement from talking with others over the coffee and doughnuts; but the burning question of how he is to get well is still uppermost in his mind. We glibly speak of our concern for new people and say that they are the lifeblood of the Fellowship, but as soon as the meeting is over we break up into small groups for the social contact that seems to be so very important. All too frequently, the new person is left to his own devices, and the glowing words of concern just expressed turn out to be just that—words.*

*Procedure or format of the meetings has also become quite important. Reading "what AA is," the Steps, Traditions, announcements, secretary's report, other meetings—you name it. Let the leader realize he has omitted one of these items, and he immediately becomes profusely apologetic. Form seems to have supplanted substance in order of importance. If AA does not provide the means for the unburdening in depth that so many have need of, where does one go from there? Little wonder that so many AAs are actively engaged in a search outside the Fellowship.*

*Criticism that does not offer an alternative is worthless. May I, therefore, suggest that the formation of Fifth Step groups might be in order? A return to the small groups of the early days might create a climate more conducive to an exchange in depth. I do not suggest that we eliminate any existing meetings, for the simple reason that not everyone wants or feels need of anything new or different. But why not provide for those who do? On reflection, I discover that I could never think my way into right action, but I can act my way into right thinking. Two goals of the kind of group I suggest would be to rid ourselves of the burden of guilt and to concentrate on how we are acting now. I've also learned that if I don't feel right it's only my conscience telling me that I'm off the beam. I'm either doing something I shouldn't or not doing something I should. Procrastination is probably my greatest enemy, I might add. It isn't always in the area of big or obvious things, either. Let me become blinded to my neglect of the little things, and I'm off and running. This is invariably followed by the erroneous belief that some circumstance or person has caused me to get upset.*

*Further, I would propose that this Fifth Step group be an open, mixed group. Mixed in that it should contain spouses, mothers, fathers, in some cases children. Someone who is in a position to observe us in our daily intimate life. Someone who means something to us and can see how we are acting, as well as hear what we are saying. We say that alcoholism is a family disease, yet at most meetings the spouse is seldom encouraged or perhaps even permitted to say anything. Al-Anon provides education by teaching the family or friends how to live with the alcoholic, but the meetings do not normally include the alcoholic. There is no direct confrontation. I'm aware that there are already many small groups in existence, but they are in constant danger of becoming sterile and ingrown for lack of involvement or confrontation with the significant others in the lives of the members. The only time things liven up is when a prospective new member appears, or a visitor from another area drops in. If you are thinking that a small mixed group such as I suggest would probably soon become a meeting of family squabbles, you could be right. It would all depend on the ground rules that are established in the beginning. If these are carefully spelled out and thoroughly understood, the meeting will not degenerate. Far from it. It will soon become an exciting and rewarding experience. Remember not to take the other person's inventory—and the field narrows considerably. To use the words of another AA: "Never mind the other fellow's sins. Your own will do very nicely."*

*Naturally, much more could be said on this subject, and in greater detail, but the foregoing should do for openers. Many will be indignant at the suggestion; some will agree; but I still say that within the framework of AA a Fifth Step group has a place. Care to join me?*

*Seeker Anonymous"*

**“Carrying the Message” AA Grapevine, March 1968, Vol. 24, No. 10**

*“You might be interested to hear that some of us feel rather strongly about the presentation of the AA program at meetings. We get together at the St. Martin’s in the Field Crypt on Tuesdays in London. The meetings seem to be going very well, and the attendance is about 200 percent up on what this meeting used to attract. By carefully speaking about the program and how it was obtained, the Steps, the Big Book, a spiritual attitude in life, and how to live, we are establishing meetings which are in sharp contrast to the usual drunkalog and “alcoholic therapy” meetings. Time will tell the results. We hope to attract—and we are, at the moment. I hope that a snowballing effect will be produced.*

*ANONYMOUS London”*

**“Dear Editors:” AA Grapevine, June 1968, Vol. 25 No. 1**

**“I believe there are ‘winds’ and ‘winds’ and some of them are far from beneficial.**

*Those winds again: In the March issue of the Grapevine, under the general head “Winds of Change,” there were three articles and an editorial concerning new kinds of meetings devoted to telling the total truth about oneself in a group. Not very many editorial features in the Grapevine produce as much comment in the form of letters and full-length manuscripts as this one has. Some but not all of the comment is contra—contra the idea of such meetings, and contra the editorial, which found in them a kind of harking-back to AA’s beginnings in the Oxford Group. Herewith we print what had come in up to the printer’s deadline for this issue, in the form of a super “Letters to the Editors” section. It warms our editorial heart to see such interest in Grapevine pages.—The Editors*

*It is traditional in AA to qualify when one speaks at an open meeting, and since the Grapevine is an open forum, I will start by stating that I have had fourteen years of uninterrupted sobriety. I have also served in nearly every AA service capacity, from coffee-maker up to and including Trustee of the AA General Service Board. In these various AA activities, I have, of necessity, both spoken and listened all over the AA world, and in the process have gathered a good deal of cross-section AA experience.*

*I am all for “Winds of Change.” Not to be would put me in the invidious position of defending the status quo, the Establishment, the “good old days and ways.” But—and it is a very large but—I believe there are “winds” and “winds” and some of them are far from beneficial. Change in the name of progress can sometimes be seriously damaging: e.g., the “winds” that have polluted the air of our cities.*

*I find myself sadly but inevitably making this analogy in my reaction to the section which the editors have featured under their “Winds of Change” banner in the March issue of the Grapevine.*

*In the editor’s introduction to this section, they state, “There has grown up a tendency, even allowing for the Fifth Step [my italics], for many AAs to attempt a spiritual life based on new principles without anything like adequate elimination of ‘old ideas’ and the behavior that resulted from them.” I do not know, of course, how the editors arrived at the statistical evidence permitting this categorical generality, since they themselves did not document it.*

*However, from my own experience based on fourteen years of attendance at Twelve Step meetings at my own and many other AA groups, I would have to reject this assumption as false or, at the least, very dubious.*

*I do not feel that further comment is needed on the editorial introduction to the three “Winds of Change” articles, since it is clearly just what it states: an introduction with a strongly implied, affirmative sponsorship of the viewpoint of the writers involved.*

*So, in order of appearance, let us first concern ourselves with the “Forty-hour Marathon Meetings.” The content of this material is concerned with the advantage of rigorous “honesty” that must accrue if the participant in this therapy is to benefit. So let us be honest. On page 5, paragraph 2, the writer states “Evidently the idea for these (marathons) comes most directly and recently from the programs for narcotics addicts called Synanon and Daytop.” Would it not be more in keeping with “honesty” if the author had given details on his attendance at such meetings in an “AA setting,” where any personal interest he may have in furthering use of marathons might have appeared? He does indeed describe, in the last paragraph of his article, the type of alcoholic who appears to find this therapy most beneficial, namely, “the long-term slipper—the AA failure.” If the author is such a “slipper” and he finds that forty hours of alcoholic talkathons “bid fair to open his heart,” then more power to him. But let us have a few clarifying statements for the AA “seeker” or newcomer, who may feel that he has strayed into the wrong pew if he reads this GV issue.*

*The fact is that programs for narcotic addicts are primarily concerned with young people from urban ghetto*

areas—our most tragic and underprivileged minority groups. They just do not represent the much larger alcoholic population, and indeed it is for this reason that both Synanon and Daytop have modified the AA program, just as we, in our turn, had to depart from the Oxford Group and evolve our own recovery principles, which are greatly different.

This reference brings me to the “quintessence” of the point of view expressed by the writers on the marathon and on the Fifth Step meetings. The writer of the first states that the “climate” of the addict’s marathon is “much closer to the tone and intention of the fifth chapter of AA’s Big Book than are most AA meetings today.” He further suggests that “thirty-five hours has proved barely sufficient for the ‘Fifth Steps’ of some sixteen people assembled for the adventure.” The Seeker Anonymous of the “Fifth Step Meeting” article suggests (page 8, paragraph 4) that there should be a Fifth Step group that should be “open and mixed”—parents, spouses, children, etc. Well, I would like to suggest to both of these writers that they first read the Fifth Step itself: “Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” Are these two members proposing a new Fifth Step? How would they like to define it?—since they are clearly purposing to change it. In the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, the exact reason for the wording of this Step in this precise way has been unmistakably spelled out by Bill W. Any investigation of AA history or of Bill’s written and spoken words would have elicited the historical fact that it was because of the “Absolutes” of the Oxford Group that Bill realized very early in AA that “open confession” and Absolute Truth, Honesty, etc. could not, would not work for the alcoholic. It was on this very issue that AA in its formative days split from the Oxford Group, and Bill is the first to say that without this split we would not have survived. Clearly, the writers of these two articles have read a different AA history and different AA literature, and have had different experiences—indeed, they appear to have heard a different Bill W. than I have.

Finally we come to the third article of the group: “Tenth/Twelfth Step Meetings.” The “seven people” he is describing presumably fit into the category described by the first writer: “long-term slippers—seasoned AA failures.” As in the case of the other two writers, this one, too, seems to feel that the Steps as written and defined in the official AA literature are inadequate.

Many have tried, but none have yet succeeded in rewriting or reilluminating the original wordings and intentions of the Twelve Steps as set down by Bill W. It is not surprising to hear this record, played again. This is the rewriter’s privilege, and if he has helped his own “hang-ups” on sex or anything else by this private version of the Eleventh and Twelfth Steps—then bully for him! I would, however, like to observe that there have always been special groups in AA—men’s discussions, women’s ditto, Eleventh Step groups—the list is endless and fills any special need that I, at least, can- think of. I am not condemning special groups as such. They fill a very vital need.

What I object to here are the sweeping generalities, such as on page 10: “All of us are sick in the same way.” Well, if there is anything I have learned in fourteen years in this program, it is the nonsense of this remark. We all indeed have the same sickness—namely, alcoholism—but we are no more sick “in the same way” than are the sufferers from any other illness. The miracle of AA is that it can and does embrace our different “ways.”

However, what I find most dangerous in “Tenth/Twelfth Step Meetings” is the statement on page 11: “First, they are not, I repeat not, group therapy. They are God and group (in that order) therapy.” How, I would like to ask, can the author be so sure about God being there? “Direct pipelines” have long been the classic syndrome of delusion, but they are usually clinical in nature and individual. Does the author suggest that his group has a group pipeline? Personally, I find God, as I understand Him, in every AA meeting, but I would find it more than presumptuous, and indeed frightening, to believe that I could evoke Him. Grace comes to us AAs, it seems to me, unbidden. It is one of the sources of our mysterious process and one we never presume to have earned. I, therefore, find this kind of spiritual arrogance out of place in an official AA magazine which is read by vulnerable newcomers. It is even possible that many of them and many of us still find our main “hang-ups” quite solvable within the framework of the AA program if we truly and continuously remain a viable part of its mainstream.

M. V. B.

Chappaqua, New York

**“Dear Editors:” AA Grapevine, July 1968, Vol.25. No.2 Those ‘Winds’ again**

*I bought three copies of the March Grapevine to send to some friends who are not members of AA. I changed my mind after reading the “Winds of Change” articles, and decided the garbage can was the best place for the issues... Why not give a name to all the groups so described: “Sick, Sick, Sick Groups.” In my opinion the “winds of change” are blowing straight from an open sewer.*

*M. B.*

*Vancouver, British Columbia*

Note: More of the 1968 responses to the ‘Winds of Change’ can be seen in the A.A. Grapevine Archive. There are too many articles to put in this appendix, though not all responses were against.

**“I Have Walked down Those Same Streets” AA Grapevine, September 1971**

***“To a daughter in trouble comes this message of love—a sharing of experience to remind and comfort us all***

*DEAR ALLISON:*

*This is probably the hardest and most important letter I have ever had to write. I am trying to communicate to you that I not only love you and care about you, but truly understand your problems—because I have had similar troubles in my own life.*

*The familiar cry of the teenager, “You just don’t understand,” does not apply to this mother. Not only do I have empathy for you and compassion for you, but I have walked the streets you have walked, been through the hells you have been through, and turned on as you have turned on, although with a different chemical. And I have lived to come back from the depths of perdition to life and health and God’s clean air!*

*No one knows what makes a loving, warm, attractive woman become an alcoholic. And I do not really know what pushed you into drugs. But I do know that there is such a thing as an addictive personality. A psychological as well as physical dependence on chemicals turns us into something completely different from the people we were meant to be.*

*Our use of the chemical always starts out as a lark and may continue to be for many years. Then, one day, we cross that invisible line between socializing and dependence—in your case, between turning on with the crowd and needing to turn on to feel “normal.”*

*Normality is different for each of us. I would say it is the state of being comfortable, secure, and happy. And if the only time we can feel this way is when we are high, then we are both in trouble. I believe you when you say that you never really turned on for kicks, that you believed the phrase “mind-expanding drugs,” that you thought this route was the way to find yourself, your lifestyle, and God. And then suddenly—boom! Drugs became a necessary part of your life.*

*In my case, I started drinking because everybody else did. For years, I went along just fine, and then—boom! I needed it. A similar experience? You bet! This is what I have been trying to get through to you for so long, with varying degrees of success: While our addictive patterns may be quite different, in recovery we are all alike! An addict is an addict. Chemical addiction is chemical addiction, whether it be dependence on booze or speed or heroin.*

*When a fun-loving woman needs to be half-drunk to have fun—when suddenly it isn’t fun any more, so she decides to stop drinking and then finds she can’t—this is addiction. The bottle becomes as terrible, as frightening as any needle containing a chemical.*

*I hope I can convince you that today—in this age of enlightenment and compassion toward illness and human failings—you do not need to descend to the depths before you begin the long climb back. The bottom I reached was so degrading that I pray God you do not need to go through a similar experience. As I said, for years I was a perfectly acceptable social drinker. And then something happened. Suddenly, I was in trouble. I have tried to decide for myself just when and where I was when I crossed that invisible line. I do not know. I do know it happened after your grandfather died. Perhaps my balance wheel was suddenly taken from me; I must have been more dependent on him than even I realized. Anyway, suddenly I couldn’t handle alcohol any more.*

*I lost a job through drinking and finally ended up in the psychiatric ward of a general hospital. While this experience didn’t hurt, it really didn’t help. An addict is not necessarily psychotic. Though our behavior may seem*



*totally unbalanced to those who love us, it is the chemical and not necessarily a personality problem that occasions this behavior. Of course, some doctors do not agree. I still remember the learned psychiatrist who told me I was a manic-depressive and such a typical case that he would like to put an interview on tape to use as a teaching example! Of course, I accepted. I've always loved to talk. Now that I know my problem is alcohol, I often wonder—with varying degrees of humor—if that poor, confused little man is still using my tape.*

*No, psychiatry is generally not the answer for us. It is the chemical that causes us to develop crazy personality traits. Remove the chemical, and part of the problem is solved. But remember this: When you remove something from your life, you must replace it with something else. A new lifestyle is an absolute necessity. For me, Alcoholics Anonymous was the answer. For you? This is something you must decide for yourself. The Synanon program and the experiments conducted at Day-top both have been successful for many. Would either help you? Well, go and find out.*

*That's what another psychiatrist finally advised me to do. He told me he thought I was "slightly alcoholic" and should go to AA and find out. His statement always makes me think of the AA saying "Being a little bit alcoholic is like being a little bit pregnant. Either you are—or you ain't."*

*Knowing nothing about the AA program, I shied away. I certainly was no skid-row bum! And I certainly didn't want to associate with people like that! So, when I returned from the hospital, I did not take the good doctor's advice. How foolish! I could have saved myself years of heartache and degradation if I had only made one phone call. Never condemn anything you do not know about. Never!*

*I went back to work, and for about nine months things went along pretty well. I was not drinking, but I was not happy, either. I remember wondering whether I had to go through my whole life being either drunk and happy or sober and miserable. It seemed God had played a rather nasty trick on me.*

*Then something happened. I remember that the incident was triggered by my winning a \$10 jackpot at work. But the underlying reason, of course, was that I was an alcoholic and here was a perfect excuse for a drink—a little extra money. I had been living frugally for months in order to pay off my bills.*

*Oh my, the elaborate excuses we invent to get that first drink! We think we are tired or nervous or hot or unhappy. The truth is, we simply want to drink. Our bodies crave it, and our minds stimulate the need by saying, "To hell with everything. I need a drink." Didn't you tell me you had taken speed once because you had had very little sleep and needed a pick-me-up? And this after you had been straight for many, many months? Do you see the similarity?*

*For me, the result was that I lost my job once again. Then I really panicked! There I was, thirty-five years old, and I was afraid to tell your grandmother I had been fired. So I didn't tell her. I got dressed the next morning and pretended I was going to work. Of course, I headed for the nearest bar. I remember that on that particular morning you said, "Oh Mommy, please come home early tonight. I found the Chinese checkers, and we can play a game."*

*"I will," I said.*

*"Do you promise?" you pleaded.*

*"I promise," I answered. And then I walked out the door, and it was a year and a half before I saw you again.*

*Demented behavior? How else can one explain it? During that year and a half, whether I was drunk or sober, your words rang in my head: "Please come home early tonight." And I had left, with only the clothes I had on my back. Me—the most clothes-conscious of women. And I had not gone home. Me—a mother who dearly loved her daughter. I had walked out the door with no intention of returning.*

*Here began a period I hope I never, never go through again. I literally had no home. I remember sleeping on the steps of an apartment house for a few hours one night. I made friends—mostly men—who really were very good to me. I could have had some harrowing experiences, but apparently my judgment was still good enough that I only took up with "beautiful" people.*

*Johnny Cash's song "Sunday Morning Coming Down" brings tears to my eyes because I remember that feeling so well. I remember it was almost Christmas, and I was walking down the deserted "Sunday-morning sidewalks" softly singing Christmas carols to myself. I had asked your grandmother's permission to come home for Christmas. She refused. While this was very wrong of her, I cannot blame her. She was frightened and hurt and completely without knowledge of what was wrong with me and how to handle the situation.*

*Always remember, my love, that whenever you need me—I am here. Whenever you want to come home—your home is here waiting for you. Sick or well—just come. Help and understanding are never farther away than the nearest telephone. Call collect or have someone call for you if you cannot. That is one mistake I will not compound.*

*Oh, my God, the price I have paid for a drink!*

*And you, dear Allison, what has this done to you? Pushed you into drugs? Made you run away from a reality that for you is too horrible to go through without a crutch? Driven you into a life of misery and degradation and despair? Dear God, I hope not. I hope I am not to blame for your problem. Perhaps we will never know. The cause is not really important. The result and what you do about it are all-important. Please, my dear, try to find your way back to me, to help and hope and health. Let me do what I can to correct what may have been, at least partially, my fault.*

*Allison, please come home!*

*All my love,*

*Mother*

*Albuquerque, New Mexico”*

**“About Alcoholism - Alcoholism Information, Research and Treatment” AA Grapevine, May 1972, Vol. 28**

### **“The Addicted Woman**

*Alcoholism and other addictions as they affect women will be the theme of the Spring Conference of the Michigan Alcohol and Addiction Association, to be held May 7-8-9 at the Pantlind Hotel in Lansing, Mich. Among the talks scheduled are: “Trends in Chemical Abuse in Women” (R. Gordon Bell, MD); “Addiction: Where Women Are At” (Edward J. Lynn, MD); “Women, Industry, and Alcoholism” (Betty Snider). Two panel discussions, both under the theme heading “The Addicted Woman,” will consider different types of drug addiction. Alcohol will be the concern of the first, with an all-female panel comprising four AAs and one Al-Anon. Heroin and other “hard drugs” will be discussed by a Synanon panel. For further information, write: Box 61, Lansing, Mich.*

### **“The Enemy of Continuing Sobriety” AA Grapevine, March 1975, Vol. 31 No. 10**

*There are many esoteric practices that lead us into self-indulgence. AA is a program for reducing ego SOME YEARS ago at a participation meeting, I heard a young man hold forth on “not going for this ‘Get rid of your ego’ stuff.” He was deliberately trying to build up his ego, develop more self-awareness, express himself, cultivate his own me-ness. I disagreed with and was made uneasy by this line of thinking. As I recollect, however, I felt it prudent not to take issue with the young man. We have many meetings in the area I live in, and I almost never visit the one where this heresy—as I considered it—was expressed. But a year or so later, in another group, I heard the same young man confide in a chastened manner that he had just come back to Alcoholics Anonymous after a prolonged struggle with drinking. To me, this confirmed my misgivings about the self-developing, self-expressing course he had originally taken. Still later, I happened to be present at the meeting where he celebrated his first birthday. On that occasion, I didn’t hear a word about ego-building.*

*A currently fashionable phrase keeps popping up lately among the AA people I see: people-pleaser. Those who claim this designation are always “former” people-pleasers. Now they are pleasing themselves, thinking of what they want to do, and being “good” to themselves. One of the “former people-pleasers” blithely stated one evening at a meeting on the topic of tolerance that, since joining AA, she had learned to become intolerant; that is, she no longer had to tolerate anything she didn’t like.*

*Because I am inclined to be opinionated, always knowing best, I have restrained myself and forbore commenting too emphatically on the above-mentioned approaches to recovery from alcoholism. Occasionally, I get a dim glimpse of the possibility that I just could be wrong now and then. I was pretty sure, however, that the cases I have mentioned were not in tune with the basic program of recovery suggested by Alcoholics Anonymous. So I gathered up what humility I could muster and did a little research by rereading Chapter Five in Alcoholics Anonymous and the section on the Steps in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.*

*This time, I found that I did happen to be right, that my recollection of the AA way was fundamentally accurate. For, in the Big Book, self (or ego) is invariably presented as the enemy of continuing sobriety. “Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles.” On the same page (62), it is noted that we are cases of “self-will run riot.” On page 63, an example of how to take Step Three says, “Relieve me of the bondage of self.”*

*I refer the “people-pleasers” to page 61 of Alcoholics Anonymous: “He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. . . .The show doesn’t come off very well. He begins to think life doesn’t treat him right. He decides to exert himself more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. . . .What is his basic trouble? Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Is he not a*

victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well? . . . Our actor is self-centered—egocentric.” In fact, “doing for others” may be a form of domination—i.e., selfishness.

The Big Book doesn't fool around at way stations of subtle forms of ego-feeding. It goes straight to the source of our troubles: self-centeredness. In my opinion, that includes the stylish activity of “finding one's identity.” If I read our founders correctly, the message is: Don't worry about who or what you are; just seek to make contact with something greater than yourself. Most people call this “something” God, but it can be truth, beauty, love, natural forces, whatever you find in your search. Meanwhile, hold out a steadying hand to another suffering human being; and maybe, one day, you'll turn around and there you'll be—whatever or whoever you are. And by that time, you probably won't be very excited or even interested in making your own acquaintance. You'll just be somebody who's been there all the time.

When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, I didn't interpret what I read and heard from older members as advice to take a course of “finding myself,” “seeking my identity,” or being “good” to me. I'd already been doing all of that for over thirty years, a lot of the time with a thin-stemmed glass gracefully poised in one hand as I developed my personality, expounded my convictions, and indulged my own “needs.” (Anything I wanted became a “need.”) Sure, I tried to please people—once in a while—but I knew what I was doing: Pleasing others was a way of getting them to indulge my whims and be nice to me; that, in turn, polished up my self-image of “What a charming girl I am!”

Right off, I got the message I have quoted from Chapter Five: What was the matter with me was simply self-centeredness. I don't say I understood the message thoroughly on the first reading, almost eleven years ago; and I can't say I whole-heartedly liked it; but I didn't really mind learning that the cause of my multitudinous psychological problems was so simple and so easy to comprehend.

The catch was that the personality and character defects stemming from this cause weren't so simple and easy to dispose of. I discovered the catch when I went at the task of ridding myself of them with the only methods I had previously known how to use—that is, by making up my mind to do better, by using willpower, by giving myself good talking-tos, by trying to keep sharp watch on my habits and thereby change them. Farther along in the book, however, I learned that our forefathers in AA had found a better way: They prayed that their character defects would be removed—but first, they became willing to let go of the root of these defects, their self-centeredness.

Another catch is that one has to be “entirely ready” to have one's shortcomings removed; and this I've had some difficulty in achieving. I still frequently want my own way and am consequently blind to the needs of others at that moment, even though I know that this exercise in self-will can lead only to discomfort for myself, that only forgetfulness of self—the AA way—allows a person to function freely and happily. Two years ago, at an AA regional conference, I dropped in at an Al-Anon workshop. The members were discussing a recent national Al-Anon conference recommendation that only literature approved by their conference should be on display or given out at Al-Anon meetings. It was not that Al-Anon has anything against other inspirational, spiritual, or therapeutic methods, but that Al-Anon has its own program of recovery, and that program is all it should try to offer the new or old member. If the discussion or the literature at Al-Anon meetings deals with other means of self-help, there are likely to be so many varying forms of therapy suggested that the new person may become even more confused than he or she already is. Here is the conclusion I took away from the workshop: Presenting the Al-Anon program is that organization's one and only modest aim. If, outside the meetings, anyone wishes to ply her (or his) friends with old or recent books, push her own religious or philosophical affiliations, or urge some particular brand of psychotherapy, she may hop to it; but during meetings, the Al-Anon program is all the group has to offer. In Alcoholics Anonymous, I think we rather consistently do just what the Al-Anons were talking about: stick to the Twelve Steps. But occasionally one does hear remarks like those I reported at the start of this article. For example, transactional analysis is big in this area now, and we frequently hear references to the “games” people play. Existentialist philosophy was in style some years back; then Esalen-type groups were in. And the Synanon games had their day. Back in 1935, when AA started, psychoanalysis was big—if you could afford it. There were both scholarly and popular self-help books on the market, each with The Answer—by authors most people under thirty today never heard of.

I am not putting down the explanations of the human psyche presented by any of the groups or literature I have mentioned. I am not even suggesting that many persons cannot get needed help from some or all of them—just as many may be helped by religions, whether their choice is Christianity or Hinduism. Neither am I denying that some persons may be so mentally deranged as to need crash treatment by qualified psychiatric personnel before they are able to grasp the meaning of the Twelve Steps.

Nevertheless, old Alcoholics Anonymous has gone right along, year in and year out, disregarding current fads, providing nothing but the basic and bluntly realistic message that it started out with. Let's face it—most of us, after we have been detoxified or the hangover has worn off, are perfectly capable of taking in that message, even if we

refuse, or are too weak, to act on it immediately.

The AA program may seem simplistic to people who enjoy intellectualization or mechanistic “game” theories, and its diagnosis of selfish self-indulgence and “self-will run riot” as key factors in alcoholism may be distasteful. But if you want to get well and stay well, we have in AA an approach, a method, a therapy, that is different from and more effective than any other I have encountered in all my years of reading and studying in the field of psychology, starting long before Alcoholics Anonymous was born, and continuing ever since.

B.M.

Saratoga, California

**“About Alcoholism” AA Grapevine, June 1975, Vol. 32 No. 1**

### **“Two Hospital Programs**

Many of these items are contrary to AA philosophy. Their publication here does not mean that the Grapevine endorses or approves them; they are offered solely for your information.

A combination of the approaches used by Synanon and Alcoholics Anonymous has led to development of a third type of treatment which can be especially effective with both narcotics and alcohol abusers.

Samuel W. Anglin of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Washington, D.C., noted that the combined treatment is of special value for recovering narcotics addicts who develop a dependency on alcohol, and for polydrug abusers. The approach has been used at the hospital for more than a year “with a relatively high degree of success,” he reported.

Among specific benefits he cited were:

The former addict’s problems of overcoming loneliness and gaining social growth are eased by participation in the recovery network of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous; Synanon’s intense behavior-modification techniques speed up the alcoholic’s realization he is an alcoholic and not just a “heavy drinker”; with the combined treatment, costs are dramatically reduced, since only one facility, one staff, one training program are required. Self-help aspect also leads to cost reduction; in the single setting, individuals receive preventive education on a variety of drugs they may not be familiar with and are also more likely to encounter individuals from other generations and other cultures.

*The Journal (Addiction Research Foundation)”*

**Are There Magic Answers? AA Grapevine, June 1979, Vol. 36 No. 1**

**“He found what he needed in the AA program WHEN I CAME into AA fourteen years ago, it was fashionable for some members to go to other groups outside AA for “extra” help. I recall asking my sponsor about an organization that specialized in post-psychiatric care. He advised me to wait until I was better grounded in AA. I was miffed, because at that time I thought I was well grounded in AA. But I followed his suggestion.**

I finally went to Recovery, Inc., and Synanon and Daytop Village and group therapy and Overeaters Anonymous, and quickly stopped going to all of them. I belonged in AA. By the time I went elsewhere for magic answers, I had already begun to find them in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is tailored perfectly for me. I was then sober long enough to realize that compulsively joining other groups was not the answer.

Now I hear it has become a thing with some AAs to attend Al-Anon meetings. I use the word “attend” because I don’t believe the majority of these AAs are joining Al-Anon in the true sense of the word. At least that’s what my Al-Anon friends tell me. They object to alcoholics who go to Al-Anon meetings and promptly talk exactly as if they were at an AA meeting. I can’t say I blame them. We don’t look kindly on outsiders who take the focus off the AA program of recovery at our meetings; why should Al-Anons meekly accept our taking the focus away from their program of recovery?

An AA who attends Al-Anon and promptly identifies himself as an alcoholic puts himself in the same position as a compulsive overeater at a closed meeting of AA announcing his food addiction. Some people in the room object strenuously. This dissension may have a deleterious effect on the harmony of the group. I realize we may all be talking about the same thing in the final analysis, but the day has not yet arrived when all the self-help groups can sit down in one tent.

As the years go by, some AAs join different churches, go into therapy, read innumerable self-improvement books, rely on doctors or metaphysics, investigate transactional analysis or transcendental meditation. The list is endless.

*Obviously, one branch of the Christian church was not sufficient to satisfy the restlessness in the souls of human beings. Yet individual members of these churches each believe that their version is the correct version, and there is indeed much beauty in all of them. So why shouldn't AAs join all these other helping fellowships?*

*Some of us should—at the right moment. For me, it was (to coin an original phrase) simply a matter of “First Things First.” It took time to understand our simple program. I tended to complicate it at first. In some cases, I think, the people who require other groups have blocked out the spiritual core of the AA program. For me, AA is essentially a spiritual program. Spirituality lessens the need to log hours at all sorts of other meetings outside AA. If I am floating on the warm stream of faith, I don't have to search as hard. The longer I am in AA, the less I understand about the identity and workings of the Higher Power, and the more I am happily convinced of Its existence. AA is the forerunner of all these groups, and there is little doubt in my mind Who or What helped Bill and Dr. Bob begin AA.*

*If I had tried too much in that first year or two, I would have learned a little bit about a lot of approaches and not much about my primary source of growth and health. Running was no answer while I was drunk; why would it be while I am sober?*

*I am not for a second suggesting that anyone drop out of anything he or she does that is helpful. I simply mean that for me at the start it was a lifesaver to stop, wait, and listen. Popping in and out of other groups, loudly demanding balm for my pain, was not the best way for me. I had to learn to shut up and listen in AA. If I had not been fair in giving AA time to work, in all probability I would not have given a fair amount of time to other organizations, anyway.*

*At one time in my life, I may have had problems that some other group could have helped me with. But by the time I arrived in AA, it was obvious that alcoholism was my number one problem. The recovery program presented to me is still an all-inclusive one covering the mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of my disease.*

*Part of my illness was impatience, coupled with a very low tolerance for pain. I drank alcohol as a solution to those problems, and it was inevitable that I should think if one was good, two would be better, etc. So if one group was good, two were great, and three would be even better. My sponsor advised me to slow down. How right he was in my case, at that early stage in my sobriety.*

*Over the years, our attitudes are changed by the AA program. And so our needs, too, may change. In the beginning, I was serene in my feeling that only AA people understood me. It was us against them. Slowly, I learned to relate to the entire human race. The people who lived through my active alcoholism deserve all the love and respect I can show them. I did not think so at first. I felt different from them. Now, I see that we are more alike than unlike. I have one illness, and some of them have others. But for the grace of God, our roles could have been reversed. When I attend Al-Anon meetings, I try to learn from them. My friends in Al-Anon have helped me to stop brooding morning, noon, and night about the newcomers I sponsor. Al-Anons work at “detaching with love,” and they have pointed out to me that when this process is accomplished, I am free to work on myself and continue to grow. I will be forever grateful to them for this insight.*

*But it is within AA that my growth as a sober alcoholic takes place.*

*E. S.*

*Manhattan, New York*

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