



Pass it on

OUR "MEETING IN PRINT"

A Monthly Publication of the Birmingham Intergroup Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous

It's MY Story: Notes on the first telling

BY: Sarah M

Telling my story for the first time felt terrible. Four men walked into the room because their parole terms demanded it, not because they wanted to be there. Nicely dressed and manicured, thinking I knew "that population" because of my varied teaching experience, I stepped behind the podium ready to reach out with loving arms and connect with my audience. That did not happen. One of the class members was doing paperwork. When my host asked the man to stop and listen, the parolee argued with him. Another man walked in and out of the room at least three times. A third seemed to be completely withdrawn or asleep. On a positive note, one older man in the back seemed to listen, and I could feel the whole group's attention a time or two. Still, it mostly felt like talking to a wall. While most speakers go on for at least 45 minutes, I ran out of steam after 20 or 30 and would have been lost without my notes. My host complimented me on a good first telling (what a gentleman!), and then he said, "Your story is your story."

My story is my story. Those words stopped me cold. As alcoholics and addicts, we stand on common ground. I do not have to find intersections between my story and your story. My listeners were parolees and I was free; we shared a disease, and it was not my place to make us alike in any other way. I need to hear my story. By giving me the floor to tell that story, AA members allow me to hear it. I hope that those men in the required class found something worth their time—but that is beyond my control and not the point. I can try to speak clearly and stick to the outline of what I was like, what happened, and what I am like now (BB 58). Beyond that, it is in my Higher Power's hands. All I get to say is, "Thank you for letting me share."

What a hard lesson! As Mark Twain said, "A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn no other way." If someone had tried to explain the story-sharing dynamic to me beforehand, I would not have understood. A teacher for decades and more comfortable in front of a group than part of one, I figured telling my story would be fun, just like talking to students, presenting a paper, or chairing a meeting. The listeners would pay attention, laugh at my jokes, ask penetrating questions, and generally send warm fuzzies. I was wrong. Getting the audience to like me (or even listen) is not the purpose. I am sharing my story, not performing or teaching a class.

In most cases, people who share their stories do get support and encouragement. The listeners acknowledge our commonalities and clap when we finish. That is not the point, however. Though everyone knows that the first rule of communication is to consider the audience, the AA goal is different. We "share our experience, strength, and hope." (BB xxiv). We cannot control how our listeners receive it. I needed to spend more time pondering *my* experience. That is plenty hard, maybe harder than consciously trying to influence people's response. Of course, I want to organize my story, speak loudly enough to be heard, and slow down enough to be understood. Beyond that, however, I need to trust my higher power. While one finger was pointing at my audience, I forgot about the three that were pointing at me. Next time, I will respond to the real challenge: focus on my story, tell it, and thank everyone for listening.

What happens when you share your story? Send us your thoughts—
passitonbirmingham@gmail.com.

AA History & Trivia

February's AA Trivia question: Congress passed an amendment to the Constitution in February 1933. (They ratified it that December.)

- A. Which amendment was it?
- B. Why did this seem like a late Valentine's Day present to some people?

Send your answer to: passitonbirmingham@gmail.com and you'll be entered in a drawing to win a free 6-month subscription!

Last month's AA Trivia answer:

The question asked: *What relationship did Dr. Bob have with the Towns Hospital in 1934?* **Semi-Correct Answer:** That is where Bill Wilson received care for his alcoholism under Dr. Silkworth. That is true. However, the question was about Dr. Bob. He became part of the courtesy staff at the Towns Hospital when his drinking interfered with his work at City Hospital. (From Narrative Timeline) The brave person who answered this got a six-month newsletter subscription anyway.

Do you enjoy this newsletter?

If so, gift it to your friends. Send Central Office the mailing information and a check with *Pass it On* in the Memo line: \$11 for one year, \$50 for five, \$100 for a lifetime membership.

ONE DAY
AT A TIME

NEWCOMER'S CORNER

"Keep it Simple, Sweetheart"

[From practicethesepinciplesthebook.com](http://Frompracticethesepinciplesthebook.com):

Simplicity is the operating principle of the program and of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Without it neither would work. Hence Dr. Bob's last words to Bill. ("Let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple"). Dr. Bob frequently used this phrase to remind Bill W. that too much information was destructive to the newcomer.

The need for simplicity arises from the fact that what we are dealing with is not simple. Life is not simple. People and relationships are not simple. God is not simple. . .

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous, however, can be broken down into a simple context as outlined in the final paragraph on page 164 of the Big Book, "Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you—until then."

Comment: Remember that AA is a spiritual program, not an intellectual program. Some of our best thinking got us drunk, so we can't expect our thinking to get us sober. Keep it simple, sweetheart.



STEP OF THE MONTH—STEP 2:

"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

TRADITION OF THE MONTH—TRADITION 2:

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

Birmingham Central Office

Contact Office to Buy:

Big Books

Twelve Steps/Twelve Traditions

Chips and Medallions

Other AA Approved Literature

NEW HOURS FOR CENTRAL OFFICE

EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 1ST

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
and Saturday — 9:00 AM—3:00 PM

Wednesday and Sunday—Closed

Are you new to the AA program? If so, welcome! We are glad you are here! Do you need a little more information?

Check us out at: www.birminghamaa.org or call us at the Birmingham Central Office (205) 290-0060.

WELCOME HOME

Please submit articles about anything related to recovery, sobriety, or alcoholism. Share your experience, strength and hope! Send your work to: passitonbirmingham@gmail.com

LOCAL AA ANNOUNCEMENTS

**11th ANNIVERSARY
CALERA AA GROUP
HEARTS ON FIRE**

February 15, 2020



- 5:00PM Fellowship
- 6:00PM Dinner
- 7:00PM Speaker
- 50/50 Raffle

Desserts & Drinks are welcome.

Concord Baptist Church, 11215 Highway 22, Calera, AL 35040

New Meeting: Spiritual Kindergarten

Big Book Study for Women!

Children Welcome!

Saturdays at 7:00 P.M. Prince of Peace Catholic Church,
4600 Preserve Parkway, Hoover, AL 35226

Steering Committee

- Melanie S., Committee Chair
- Steve P. (Moody Crossroads), Co-Chair
- Russel M., Secretary and Manager of Central Office
- Mary G. (Day by Day), Treasurer
- Bill M. (Moody Crossroads)
- Mark L. (Hope on Highlands)
- Myron E. (Hope on Highlands)

Meeting Changes

The Came to Believe Meeting has moved across the street to below Wild Roast Coffee in the basement. The meeting will return to the outdoors in the spring. Chairs are needed, so bring a chair to share!

Starting January 6, 2020, Warrior AA Group will Begin at 7:00 PM on Mondays at the Warrior Community Center.

Exploring Anonymity

(from a presentation to the 39th General Service Conference) Excerpt from *The Grapevine*, December, 1992

(From the end of the article)

. . . No look at anonymity as practiced by AA can be truly complete, however, without including the question: Is it possible for an AA member to be too anonymous - too anonymous for the good of the individual and the Fellowship? The answer is "yes." And there are more than a few examples of this. For example, there are members who feel they must not tell their families or their friends or co-workers or doctors or ministers or lawyers that they are members of AA. There have even been instances when members have sent requests for information to GSO and not included a last name or have sent checks - hard to believe - unsigned. So, there is indeed such a thing as an AA member being "too anonymous":

1. Where it can mean failure to extend the helping hand when the need arises;
2. Where it can mean failure to correct misconceptions about AA, both inside and outside the Fellowship;
3. Where it can stifle - even stop - the flow of AA knowledge and subsequent sobriety from one person to another.

This is anonymity at the personal level and can indeed be - and sometimes is - carried too far, even as Bill says to "the point of real absurdity." Anonymity at the public level, however, is another matter, and no member of the AA Fellowship has shown the genuine humility to practice anonymity at the public level more dramatically and in a more truly self-sacrificing manner than Bill himself. Considering the size of today's AA population, the number of public anonymity breaks - though most disconcerting when they do occur and sometimes potentially dangerous - are comparatively few and infrequent. This may be because as AA matures, its members more fully understand the value to themselves for anonymity at the public level.

It maybe also because of Bill's remarkably powerful example of personal sacrifice - his consistent backing away from personal honor for the good of all. What a demonstration of anonymity in action this is for all to follow. Over a period of years, Bill:

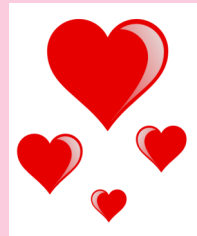
1. Discouraged any Nobel Prize possibility for himself;
2. Declined awards from several colleges (suggesting they be offered instead to the Fellowship itself);
3. Turned down inclusion of his name and a brief personal history in Who's Who in America . . .
4. Said thank you but no thanks to an honorary degree from Yale University in New Haven;
5. Rejected a Time magazine story that would have included his full-face picture on the cover of that national publication;
6. Refused the Lasker Award (which was then given to Alcoholic Anonymous instead);
7. And posthumously (through his wife Lois) declined an honorary degree from his old school, Vermont's Norwich University.

When Bill died, his anonymity was broken in the press (as was Dr. Bob's at the time of his earlier death). But both Bill and Dr. Bob were buried, years and miles apart, without fanfare, and there is no mention on their tombstones of their great and lasting contributions to Alcoholics Anonymous. Clearly, in the manner in which they both lived their anonymity, Dr. Bob and Bill acted on the same ideas as the advice given in the ethics of the fathers more than 2,300 years ago: "that it is better to be a tail among lions than the head among foxes." And just as clearly, their lives have demonstrated how sure are the rewards of humility promised those same many centuries ago, to wit: "from him who seeks greatness, greatness flees [while] him who flees greatness, greatness follows."

Anonymous, New York, N.Y. Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc. Silkworth.net PDF Index

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Permission granted by:
Daniel Pensante, Controller



Dr. Bob>>>



<<< Bill W.

