

Jack Alexander

Postings from the AAHistoryLovers
April 2, 2002 – March 18, 2010

Message #6398

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6398>

From: Jared Lobdell <jlobdell54@hotmail.com>
(jlobdell54 at hotmail.com)

Jack Alexander was, I believe, b. February 8 1903, but beyond the fact that he died in Florida in 1975 (perhaps in September), I have no vital statistics on him.

Message #6396

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6396>

Jack Alexander

We have been asked for Jack Alexander's date of birth and for a photograph of him.

Box 459 for February-March 2008 http://www.aa.org/en_pdfs/en_box459_febmar08.pdf has a photo of him.

There is also what appears to be a poorer copy of the same photo, cropped down a bit and (it seems to me) vertically distorted, at <http://www.aa.org.mx/Experiencias.htm>

Are there any other known photos?

That Box 459 article says that "in failing health, Jack Alexander and his wife Anita retired to Florida, where he died on September 17, 1975," and says that he was 38 years old when he did the Saturday Evening Post article, so he must have been born c. 1903.

Somewhat puzzlingly, many other places say that Jack Alexander died on September 19, 1975 in St. Louis. Can anyone in our group confirm which date and place is correct?

Thanks!

Glenn Chesnut (South Bend, Indiana)

Message #6220

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6220>

life of Jack Alexander

Excerpts from article by Jack Alexander in the
May 1945 Grapevine:

The History of How The Article Came To Be

Jack Alexander of SatEvePost Fame Thought A.A.s Were Pulling His Leg
AA Grapevine, May, 1945
by Jack Alexander
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"It began when the Post asked me to look into A.A. as a possible article subject. All I knew of alcoholism at the time was that, like most other non-alcoholics, I had had my hand bitten (and my nose punched) on numerous occasions by alcoholic pals to whom I had extended a hand--unwisely, it always seemed afterward. Anyway, I had an understandable skepticism about the whole business."

"My first contact with actual A.A.s came when a group of four of them called at my apartment one afternoon. This session was pleasant, but it didn't help my skepticism any. Each one introduced himself as an alcoholic who had gone "dry," as the official expression has it. They were good-looking and well-dressed and, as we sat around drinking Coca-Cola (which was all they would take), they spun yarns about their horrendous drinking misadventures. The stories sounded spurious, and after the visitors had left, I had a strong suspicion that my leg was being pulled. They had behaved like a bunch of actors sent out by some Broadway casting agency."

Message #6218

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6218>
Charles Knapp <cpknapp@yahoo.com>

From brucec55 and Charles Knapp

From: Bruce <brucec55@sbcglobal.net> (brucec55 at sbcglobal.net)

The Feb./March 2008 issue of Box 459 has a two page article on A.A. and Jack Alexander. I do not know who wrote it but the staff at GSO may know.

COPY OF THE ARTICLE ON JACK ALEXANDER:

"Jack Alexander Gave A.A. Its First Big Boost"
Box 4-5-9, February/March 2008

As the 1941 year began, Alcoholics Anonymous had about 2,000 members, many in large cities but also some in small towns and other isolated places. A 1939 national magazine article had attracted several hundred new members, and newspaper articles in Cleveland and a few other places had brought positive results. But for most of North America, A.A. was still unknown and alcoholics were dying without knowing that a new way of recovery had been discovered and was working.

All of that, however, was about to change dramatically. In less than a year, A.A. would suddenly triple its membership and be well on the way to becoming a national institution.

The man who played a key role in this lightning change was Jack Alexander, a 38-year-old writer for *The Saturday Evening Post*, which, with more than 3 million circulation, was the leading family magazine in the United States. The article he wrote about A.A. for the March 1, 1941 edition of the magazine -- simply titled "Alcoholics Anonymous" -- brought in 7,000 inquiries and became the high point of his illustrious career. The article apparently led other publications to offer similar reports of the Fellowship's work, launching A.A. on a publicity roll that lasted for years.

Alexander's article is still circulating today as a pamphlet issued by A.A. World Services, with the title "The Jack Alexander Article about A.A." Though it focuses on the A.A. of 1941, it still provides important information about alcoholism, how the Fellowship started, and what was working so well for those whom we would now call A.A. pioneers. The article has also been praised as an excellent example of good organization and writing that could be a model for journalism students. (The late Maurice Z., an A.A. member and also a highly successful magazine writer and biographer, told an A.A. session at the 1985 International Convention in Montreal that he had been impressed by the article back in 1941, long before he felt his own need to embrace the program it described!)

How did this fortunate publicity come about? What inspired it and who was responsible for bringing the idea to the attention of the *Post's* editors and nursing the story through to acceptance and completion?

The account of A.A.'s famous appearance in The Saturday Evening Post is the kind of story that gives some A.A. members goose bumps, because they see it as the sure work of Higher Power. Others would just call it a chain of coincidences that worked out favorably for the Fellowship. Whatever the case, its publication in 1941 was a bombshell breakthrough for A.A. at a critical time.

The process actually started in February 1940, when Jim B., one of the A.A. pioneers in New York City, moved to Philadelphia, the headquarters city of The Saturday Evening Post. Jim started an A.A. group in the city and, through a chance meeting at a bookstore, attracted the interest of Dr. A. Wiese Hammer, who with colleague Dr. C. Dudley Saul, became an enthusiastic A.A. advocate. Dr. Hammer just happened to be a close friend of Curtis Bok, owner of The Saturday Evening Post. After hearing Dr. Hammer's strong endorsement of A.A., Bok passed along to his editors a suggestion that they consider an article about the Fellowship. The suggestion landed on the desk of Jack Alexander, one of the Post's star reporters.

Alexander was a seasoned writer who (according to Bill W.) had just covered some rackets in New Jersey. (This gave rise to an untrue belief that he thought A.A. might also be a racket.) Born in St. Louis, he had worked for newspapers and The New Yorker before joining the Post. Alexander deserves much credit for probing deeply into a struggling society that scarcely impressed him as he started his research. Though assigned to do the story by his superiors, he could have made a superficial review of A.A. activity in New York City and then abandoned the project as "not having much merit." Indeed, he would write four years later that he was highly skeptical following his first contact with four members of A.A. who called at his apartment one afternoon. "They spun yarns about their horrendous drinking misadventures," he wrote. "Their stories sounded spurious, and after the visitors had left, I had a strong suspicion that my leg was being pulled. They had behaved like a bunch of actors sent out by some Broadway casting agency."

But Alexander was too much the professional to give up based on one unsatisfactory interview session. The next morning, he met Bill W. at A.A.'s tiny Vesey Street general service offices in downtown Manhattan. They hit it off immediately. Alexander described Bill as "a very disarming guy and an expert at indoctrinating the stranger

into the psychology, psychiatry, physiology, pharmacology and folklore of alcoholism. He spent the good part of a couple of days telling me what it was all about. It was an interesting experience, but at the end of it my fingers were still crossed. I knew I had the makings of a readable report but, unfortunately, I didn't quite believe in it and told Bill so."

At this point, Alexander could have shelved the assignment for later consideration or dropped it altogether. But Bill W. was determined not to let that happen. He dropped everything and persuaded Alexander to investigate A.A. in other cities, especially Akron and Cleveland. As Bill recalled later, "Working early and late, [Jack] spent a whole month with us. Dr. Bob and I and the elders of the early groups at Akron, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Chicago spent uncounted hours with him. When he could feel A.A. in the very marrow of his bones, he proceeded to write the piece that rocked drunks and their families all over the nation."

Alexander recalled that A.A. in those cities had impressed him mightily. "The real clincher came, though, in St. Louis, which is my home town," he remembered. "Here I met a number of my own friends who were A.A.s, and the last remnants of skepticism vanished. Once rollicking rumpots, they were now sober. It didn't seem possible, but there it was."

Now a firm believer in A.A., Alexander finished the article and sent it to Bill and Dr. Bob for review. They suggested only minor changes, though the correspondence between Bill and Jack reveals that Bill wanted no mention of the Oxford Group, a fellowship which had given A.A. its fundamental principles but after 1936 had begun falling fast in the public favor. Alexander said his editors felt the story required some mention of the Oxford Group, but he minimized it.

Then the Post made a request that could have sunk the project. The editors wanted photos to illustrate the article and this, Bill thought, would violate the Society's anonymity. But when the editors said the article wouldn't be published without photos, Bill agonized for a moment and then quickly decided the opportunity was too important to pass up. Thus one photo in Alexander's article showed Bill and seven others grouped in the old 24th Street Clubhouse in Manhattan, though the cutline carries no names. The lead photo, also unidentified, depicted a drunk using a towel to study his hand while taking a drink, and a second

photo showed a man on a hospital bed being visited by three A.A. members. Another photo showed a person being carried into the hospital on a stretcher.

Published on March 1, 1941, the Alexander piece brought a response that almost overwhelmed the resources at the small Vesey Street office. The Post forwarded to A.A. thousands of letters pouring in from across North America. Volunteers had to be called in to answer the letters, while some were sent to A.A. members and groups in their places of origin. And since A.A. still had very little literature of its own, the article served as an information piece for prospective A.A. members. In Toledo, Ohio, for example, the members gave a newcomer named Garth M. several dollars and sent him out to buy up copies around the city (the price was then five cents per copy). These then became part of the group's literature for other newcomers.

Nine years later Alexander penned another Post article about A.A. titled "The Drunkard's Best Friend." Though lacking the dramatic impact of the earlier story, it effectively detailed what A.A. had become and promised for the future -- a promise that has been fulfilled many times over. By this time, A.A. had 96,000 members and was rapidly spreading to countries around the world.

Jack Alexander remained a friend of A.A. throughout his life, and even served as a nonalcoholic (Class A) trustee on the A.A. General Service Board from 1951 until 1956. He was also said to have added "the final editorial touch" to Bill's manuscript for Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, first published in 1952. Alexander became a senior editor at the Post, and in a special tribute to him at his retirement in 1961, the Post cited the 1941 Alcoholics Anonymous piece as his most famous article for the magazine.

In failing health, Jack Alexander and his wife Anita retired to Florida, where he died on September 17, 1975. Bill W. had passed away almost five years earlier, so there was no special tribute for Jack of the kind Bill had written for other early friends of A.A. But from the Big Meeting in the Sky, Bill might have praised Jack as a man who gave us a "ten strike" and with his words virtually saved the lives of thousands. Even without Jack's wonderful article, A.A. would have survived and achieved further growth. But Jack was there at the right time with the right message for his times. Without Jack's persistence and strong belief in A.A., many could have gone to their graves

without knowing that a new way of recovery had been discovered and was working. Bill W. and the other A.A. pioneers knew that, and they never lost their gratitude for the star reporter who at first thought his leg was being pulled.

Message #6217

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6217>
Ernest Kurtz <kurtzern@umich.edu>

Re: life of Jack Alexander

Bailey, Glenn -- you guys are really marvelous. Thank you very much. Now I wonder whether the whole story of AA and Jack Alexander has been collected and published anywhere? I recall some Akron mentions of Alexander in the early correspondence. Take it away, you young sprites!

Thanks again.

ernie kurtz

On Jan 11, 2010, at 6:59 PM, Baileygc23@aol.com wrote:

- > Boss Hague: King Hanky-Panky of Jersey
- > By Jack Alexander
- > Originally appeared in The Saturday Evening Post
- > on October 26, 1940
- > Edited by GET NJ, COPYRIGHT 2002
- >
- > <http://www.cityofjerseycity.org/hague/kinghankypanky/index.shtml>

Message #6216

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6216>
From <Baileygc23@aol.com> (Baileygc23 at aol.com)

Boss Hague: King Hanky-Panky of Jersey
By Jack Alexander

Originally appeared in The Saturday Evening Post
on October 26, 1940
Edited by GET NJ, COPYRIGHT 2002

<http://www.cityofjerseycity.org/hague/kinghankypanky/index.shtml>

The Honorable Frank Hague, the perpetual mayor of Jersey City, is perhaps the most eminent mugg in the United States. Hague was a mugg when he was expelled from the sixth grade at thirteen as a truant and dullard, and he was a mugg when he started learning politics the bare-knuckles way in the tough Horseshoe district of Jersey City in the 1890's. He was still a mugg when he was elected mayor of that dreary human hive in 1917, in which capacity he has held the center of the stage ever since with the grim determination of a bad violinist. Hague will probably be known to history as a strong character who, despite all temptations to belong to other classifications, loyally remained a mugg to the end. This is a remarkable achievement when you analyze it, for Hanky-Panky, as his admirers sometimes call him, has walked with the great and good, and their only noticeable effect on him has been to give him a taste for expensive haberdashery. At heart and in practice, he is a strong-arm man today, tricked out by a clever tailor to look like a statesman.

As a wood carver fashions puppets, Hague has created governors, United States senators, and judges of high and low degree. He has been backslapped cordially by the President and by men who wanted to be President. He has bossed the state of New Jersey almost as long as he has ruled Jersey City. He has mingled intimately with leaders of medicine and the clergy and, in a famous civil-liberties case, was firmly kneaded and processed by the august Supreme Court of the United States. He is listed in Who's Who in America and, as vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee, he is a leader in the Party of Humanity.

From time to time, in his twenty-three years as mayor, he has enjoyed the investigative attentions of committees sent by the United States Senate and the New Jersey legislature and of agents of the Justice and Treasury departments. He has been a frequent guest at the baronial Duke Farms in Somerville, New Jersey, and he has dandled a teacup in the parlor of Mrs E. T. Stotesbury, the widow of a famous Morgan partner. Yet, in spite of all these softening influences, he persists in saying, "I have went," and in using singular subjects with plural verbs, and vice versa. In conversation he bellows oracularly and jabs a long finger into his listener's clavicle to emphasize his points, most of which boil down to his favorite argumentative phrase, "You know I'm right about that!" His language, when he is aroused, is that of the gin mill. He rules his city by the nightstick and the state by crass political barter. He is loud and vulgar and given to public displays of phony piety during which his enemies are dismissed as "Red," or worse.

At sixty-four, he is still erect and muscular, and he is not above physically assaulting a quailing civil employee whom he has called on the carpet. None dares to hit back, for fear of being harassed by Hague's police or being held up to public disgrace in some devious way.

A legislative committee once determined that during a seven-year period when Hague's salary, admittedly his only source of income, totaled \$56,000, he purchased real estate and other property for a total outlay of nearly

\$400,000. This was done through dummies, and payment was made in cash. Hague has always shied from bank accounts. Although his salary as mayor is only \$8000, has never exceeded \$8500 and has been as low as \$6520, Hague lives like a millionaire. He keeps a fourteen-room duplex apartment in Jersey City and a suite in a plushy Manhattan hotel. He owns a palatial summer home in Deal, New Jersey, for which he paid \$125,120 - in cash - and he gambles regularly on the horse races. Before the present war began he went to Europe every year, traveling in the royal suites of the best liners. Now he spends more time in Florida and at Saratoga Springs, where he flashes a bank roll, held together by a wide rubber band, which always contains a few \$1000 notes, a denomination of which Hague is childishly fond. Hague's public squanderings have brought Jersey City's municipal finances to a dangerous pass.

Wholly dominated by Hague, Jersey City is the worst mess of unpunished civic corruption in the forty-eight states.

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From G.C. the moderator: here is a chronological list of Jack Alexander's articles from

<http://www.philsp.com/homeville/FMI/d19.htm#A956>

ALEXANDER, JACK (stories)

The Third Party Gets a Rich Uncle (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 3 1938

Missouri Dark Mule (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 8 1938; (about Sen. Bennett Clark).

The Last Shall Be First (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 14 1939; (about Joseph Pulitzer).

He Rose from the Rich (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 11, Mar 18 1939; (about William Bullitt).

Young Man of Manhattan (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 15 1939

Reformer in the Promised Land (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 22 1939; (about Harold Ickes).

Boss on the Spot (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 26 1939; (about Enoch Johnson).

All Father's Chillun Got Heavens (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 18 1939; (about Father Divine).

Iron Floats to Market (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Dec 23 1939

Border Without Bayonets (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 6 1940

Golden Boy; The Story of Jimmy Cromwell (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 23 1940

King Hanky-Panky of Jersey (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 26 1940

"Just Call Mr. C.R." (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Feb 1 1941

Alcoholics Anonymous (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 1 1941

Nervous Ice (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 19 1941

Buyer No. 1 (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jun 14 1941

The Duke of Chicago (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 19 1941

The World's Greatest Newspaper (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 26 1941

Cellini to Hearst to Klotz (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 1 1941

Everybody's Business (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 26 1942; A great library can house romance as well as books.

Ungovernable Governor (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 23 1943
Cover Man (Norman Rockwell) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Feb 13 1943
The Next Offensive in Lisbon (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 6 1943
Panhandle Puck (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 1 1944
They Sparked the Carrier Revolution (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 16 1944
Mugwump Senator (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Feb 2 1946
Rip-Roaring Baillie (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jun 1, Jun 8 1946
The Cities of America - Raleigh (30 of a series) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 12 1947
The Senate's Remarkable Upstart (Joe McCarthy) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 9 1947
The Dagwood and Blondie Man (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 10 1948; about Chic Young.
What Does Walter Reuther Want? (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 21 1948
Stormy New Boss of the Pentagon (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 30 1949
The Drunkard's Best Friend (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 1 1950; Alcoholics Anonymous.
The Ordeal of Judge Medina (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 12 1950
What a President They Picked (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Feb 24 1951
They "Doctor" One Another (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Dec 6 1952
The Amazing Story of Walt Disney (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 31, Nov 7 1953
The Restaurants That Nickels Built (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Dec 11, Dec 18 1954
Death Is My Cellmate (Aaron Turner) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 2 1957
The Bank That Has No Secrets (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 30 1957
Mr. Unpredictable (Foster Furcolo) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 9 1958
The Cop with the Criminal Brother (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 7 1959
What Happened to Judge Crater? (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 10 1960
Dreamers on the Payroll (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 19 1960
Sunny But Somber Island (Corsica) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 28 1962

Message #6213

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6213>
Ernest Kurtz <kurtzern@umich.edu>

life of Jack Alexander

According to one common story, Alexander had just finished a piece "exposing" the mob -- in Philadelphia? Anyway, according to this story, when he first heard of AA he thought that it, too, had to be some kind of "racket," so he set out to expose it.

I'll appreciate verification of this story if anyone can come up with it, or its disproof.

ernie kurtz

Message #6212

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6212>
Baileygc23@aol.com (Baileygc23 at aol.com)

Re: Information on Jack Alexander's life

Jack Alexander retired to Florida and died there. There are two different dates given for his death date: September 19 1975 and September 17 1975.

Someone who knows how to use the obits may be able to find more from his obit.

Message #6211

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6211>

Charlie C <route20guy@yahoo.com> (route20guy at yahoo.com)

Re Jack Alexander, I see his obit in the NY Times for 9/20/75. It is a brief piece, mentioning that he was from St. Louis, had worked for the St. Louis Star and Post-Dispatch before joining the Daily News in NYC in 1930. He then moved to the New Yorker, and then the Saturday Evening Post, from which he retired as a senior editor in 1964. He died 9/19/75 in St. Louis, and was survived by his widow.

Charlie C.

Message #6187

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/6187>

Glenn Chesnut <glennccc@sbcglobal.net>

EARLY PHILADELPHIA A.A. SUCCESS RATE:

The early Philadelphia figures are a lot like the early New Jersey figures, that is, the majority of the successes they are claiming, which they are using to claim such a prodigiously high success rate, are based on cases where the people have only been dry for three or four months (or in one case just a single month). There is no workable way to compare them very well with modern AA retention rate figures like the ones just mentioned. But here is what the Philadelphia figures said:

Philadelphia A.A. Statistics 1940-1941

The Philadelphia A.A. group was formed February 20, 1940

Special Report On AA Work At The Philadelphia General Hospital

December 13, 1940

The following is the complete experience of the Philadelphia A.A. Group with patients of the Philadelphia General Hospital since March 15. On this list are

included only those men who have attended at least two or three A.A. meetings and have signified their intention of following the A.A. program.

Brief notes on the various individuals follow (the original letter had full names & addresses):

Joseph A. - Dry seven months, no trouble.
Frank B. - Dry five months, one slip after he left group one month ago.
Herbert C. B. - Dry four months, no trouble.
Joshua D. B. - Probably psychopathic; continuous slips.
Charles J. C. - Dry nine months, no trouble.
John D. - Dry four months through Philadelphia General Hospital and Byberry.
Joseph D. - Dry four months, no trouble.
George G. - Dry one month, no trouble.
John H. H. - Continuous slips before and after hospitalization.
William K. - Dry four months, no trouble.
Alfred K. - Dry four months, no trouble.
Arthur T. McM. - Dry eight months, no trouble.
William P. - Continuous after two hospitalizations, only attended five meetings, no work.
Harry McC. - Dry eleven months, one slip two months ago, hospitalization then.
James S. - Continuous slips before and after hospitalization.
George K. - Continuous trouble up to two months ago, first hospital May.
C. M. M. - Dry nine months, no trouble.
Hugh O'H. - Dry two months, no trouble.
Edmonds P. - Dry nine months, hospitalization recent, trouble since.
William J. P. - Dry three months, no trouble.
James R. - Dry five months, no trouble.
William R. - Dry six weeks, no trouble.
Carl R. - Dry eight weeks.
Biddle S. - Dry four months, hospital trouble now dry one month.
Thomas S. - Dry four months, one slip.
David W. - Dry seven months, no trouble.
William W. - Dry nine months, no trouble.
Margery W. - Dry three months, no trouble.

Nineteen out of twenty-eight who have come through the Philadelphia General Hospital have had no trouble. Of the nine who have had trouble, five have been with the group and had trouble previous to hospitalization.

This list was made at the request of Jack Alexander, writer for the Saturday Evening Post.

(Signed) A. W. Hammer M. D. - Surgeon

(Signed) C. D. Saul, M. D. - Chief resident, Saint Luke's Hospital

(Signed) Philadelphia General Hospital, By: John F. Stouffer M. D. - Chief Psychiatrist

The second AA Bulletin issued by the New York AA office told members of the article by Jack Alexander which was shortly going to be published in the Saturday Evening Post:

<http://hindsfoot.org/bullno2.pdf>

Message #5906

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/5906>

"Arthur S" <ArtSheehan@msn.com>

RE: No groups before GSO ??

Chronology:

On August 5, 1938 the Alcoholic Foundation was created as a charitable trust. It conducted business at the office of NY member Hank P (Parkhurst) at his company Honors Dealers in Newark, NJ.

In September 1938, Hank P persuaded Bill W to form Works Publishing Inc.

In March 1940, the Alcoholic Foundation office moved from 17 William St Newark, NJ to 30 Vesey St in NYC.

In May 1940, Works Publishing Inc was legally incorporated as a publishing arm of the Alcoholic Foundation.

After publication of the Jack Alexander article of March 1941 the NY Office asked the groups and members for donations of \$1 (\$14 today) per member per year for support for extra staff to answer the thousands of appeals for help. This began the practice of financing what is today called the "General Service Office" from group and member donations.

In the early 1940s the NY office was called either the "Headquarters" or "Central Office" or "General Office."

In August 1941 Clarence S (Snyder) founder of AA in Cleveland and Cleveland pioneer Abby G (Goldrick) helped start AA's first Central Office. The office also published AA's first newsletter, the "Cleveland Central Bulletin" in October 1942.

In June, 1944 Volume 1, No. 1 of the Grapevine was published.

The New York City Central Office (they call it "Inter-Group") was founded in 1946.

In April 1946 the AA Grapevine was legally incorporated as the second publishing arm of the Alcoholic Foundation.

In an April 1947 paper, Bill W recommended a General Service Conference and renaming the "Alcoholic Foundation" to the "General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous."

In 1953 the Alcoholic Foundation changed the corporate name of "Works Publishing" to "Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing."

The 1954 Conference approved renaming the "Alcoholic Foundation" to the "General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous."

The 1958 Conference recommended that the name "General Service Headquarters" be changed to "General Service Office."

The 1959 Conference approved renaming "Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing" to "Alcoholics Anonymous World Services" (AAWS).

Cheers
Arthur

Message #5845
<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/5845>
"Arthur S" <ArtSheehan@msn.com>

Re: There but for the grace of God

If you have a copy of the March 1, 1941 Saturday Evening Post magazine with Jack Alexander's article, one of the photos is of a staged meeting (its caption ends with "... A typical clubhouse discussion group").

Prominently displayed on the wall above a fireplace mantle behind the attendees facing forward (i.e. Ruth Hock, Bill W, Dick S and Lois W) is a rather large sign (possibly needlepoint embroidery) that reads "But for the Grace of God."

Cheers
Arthur

Message #5519
<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/5519>
"Arthur S" <ArtSheehan@msn.com>

Part 3 - The Birth of the Traditions (continued)

1940 April 16 - Cleveland Indians baseball star "Rollicking" Rollie H had his anonymity broken in the Cleveland Plain Dealer and nationally. Bill W did likewise in later personal appearances in 1942 and 1943. (AACOA 135, BW-RT 268-270, DBGGO 249-253, NG 85-87, 96-96, AACOA 24-25, BW-FH 134-135, PIO 236-238, GTBT 156)

1940 October - Bill W went to Philadelphia to speak to Curtis Bok, one of the owners of the Saturday Evening Post (the largest general circulation magazine in the US with a readership of 3,000,000). Later, in December, Jack Alexander was assigned to do a story on AA. (LR 131, BW-RT 278-279, BW-FH 140-141, PIO 244-245, GB 82)

1941 March 1 - Jack Alexander's Saturday Evening Post article was published and became AA's most notable public relations blessing. The publicity caused 1941 membership to jump from around 2,000 to 8,000. Bill W's and two other members' pictures appeared full-face in the article. (AACOA viii, 35-36, 190-191, BW-RT 281, LOH 149-150, BW-FH 146, PIO 245-247) The article, led to over 6,000 appeals for help to be mailed to the NY Office. (SM S7, PIO 249) Consequently, the NY office asked groups to donate \$1 (\$14 today) per member, per year, for support. This began the practice of financing what is today called the General Service Office from group and member donations. (AACOA 112, 192, LOH 149, SM S7)

From all these public relations blessings emerged the proven principle in the long form of Tradition 11 that states, "There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us."

Message #5322

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/5322>
From "John Barton" <jax760@yahoo.com> (jax760 at yahoo.com)

The History of Alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous
in South Orange, New Jersey

Section 3 (of 3)

Two of the newcomers with less than one year, Gordon MacDougall and Helen Penhale would become active in group affairs and later appeared in one of the photographs in the Jack Alexander article of the Saturday Evening Post, March 1, 1941. Both would hold trusted servant positions in the early years of the group. Lois's diary, indicates that she and Bill attended the South Orange meeting on February 18, 1940 and then spent the night at the MacDougall's East Orange home.

Message #5191

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/5191>
Jared Lobdell <jlobdell54@hotmail.com>

FIRST WOMAN IN A.A. IN TEXAS – ESTHER E.

(Editor's note: Esther E. is deceased. However, her story did not die with her. We found a tape that had been made of a talk she made when she was twelve years sober [in 1953?] and this is what she said.

[Additional note: Esther E. was apparently b. around 1901/2, d. in Dallas June 7 1960. Frank was b. in New Orleans Sept 9 1899 and d. in Kerrville TX Sept 1979.]

".... Finally, in 1940 we went down to Houston. My husband thought a change of scene might help me stay sober. That was my last year to drink – nothing left but to try to stay sober. Nothing really helped. Then in April 1941 I got drunk and decided to take my dog for his daily walk. I staggered down the sidewalk and suddenly the patrol car stopped, drove my dog home and drove me to jail. I was in jail only a few hours when they called my husband to come and get me. That was the day I hit bottom.

"Just a week before that (I later learned) someone had sent my husband the article in the Saturday Evening Post by Jack Alexander about AA. He was afraid to show it to me right then. I was so resentful of everything he did. He waited another week or two while I continued to drink. He was out of town and came home to find me passed out again. The next morning he came to my room and said, "Esther, I'm not going to lecture you or criticize any more, but I want you to read this article about how some people are staying sober in AA." Frank said if I would try this new thing, he would go along with me but if I did not, I would have to go home to my parents... He could not stand by and watch me destroy myself anymore.

"When he left me, I took several drinks to get my eyes to focus and I read the article – through and through. From the very first paragraph something began happening to me. I realized there were other people in this world like me, that I was sick with a disease called alcoholism. It was feeling of relief and I wanted to learn more about it. For the first time I realized there was something horribly wrong with me. The article was the first thing that had ever reached me. I told my husband I wanted to try this AA. I wrote to New York and received a personal note from Ruth Hock giving me the name of Larry Jewell. I telephoned him and learned that he was in the hospital. So, naturally, I got a pint of White Swan Gin and stayed drunk from Monday to Friday. "That Friday night, May 16, 1941, at five minutes to 6:00 p.m., I had a half water glass of White Swan Gin and with it, I humbly asked God to help me. I have not had a drink since. The next day I went to Larry's house and talked with his wife Bonita. And I met Ed H. and Roy Y. and all those first members ... and the happiest life I have ever

known."

Message #5161

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/5161>

"Arthur S" <ArtSheehan@msn.com>

RE: Larry Jewell - AA in Houston

Larry J did a remarkable job in getting AA started in Texas. The text below is from Bob P's unpublished AA history manuscript. From what I've been able to research, it appears to be factual with the exception of the year stated for Larry's death. Sadly Larry returned to drinking and the use of narcotics and it led to his death in 1944 (not 1943 as stated below).

Bob P's summary further fails to mention that Larry's Houston Press articles also attracted the first Texas woman AA member, Benita C, who later married Larry J. In April 1940, the Alcoholic Foundation reprinted Larry J's Houston Press articles as AA's first pamphlet.

From Bob P:

The colorful early history of A.A. in the Lone Star State led Bill W. to refer to it at the St. Louis Convention as "the astonishing state of Texas." The story begins in Cleveland in 1939, where a newspaperman, Larry J., had "drunk himself into the gutter." Louis Seltzer, editor of the Cleveland Press, remembered him and sent a search party to find him, offering to pay for his hospital recovery. They found him in freezing weather with no coat on, one lung collapsed from earlier tuberculosis and the other with a tube sticking out of it through his chest. At the sanatorium, Larry slowly recovered from d.t.'s, malnutrition, exposure and exhaustion. Told he would be better off where the weather was warmer, he boarded a train for Houston with a copy of Alcoholics Anonymous in hand upon reading it en route, he had a spiritual experience and determined to try to help alcoholics when he arrived.

He sought out Allan C. Bartlett, editor of the Houston Press, and after a two-hour talk, persuaded him to run a series of articles on A.A. which Larry J. wrote anonymously. Impressed by his creative brilliance, Bartlett hired him as an editorial writer. The articles attracted the attention of Bishop Clinton S. Quinn (Episcopal), who became an enthusiastic supporter and immediately arranged for Larry to talk to meetings of church officials in Houston and other towns in his diocese. They also came to the attention of Bill W., who wrote Larry a congratulatory letter from New York. And most importantly, the articles attracted some alcoholics. One of these was Roy Y. from San Antonio, who had recently sobered up in Los Angeles A.A. Another was Ed H., a great help to Larry in getting A.A. started, who was unable to stay sober himself.

The first Houston A.A. meeting was held March 15, 1940, in a room in the YWCA Bldg. The group continued to meet on Tuesdays with as many as 25 attending -- but often a different 25 each time! Ed H. and Roy Y. tried to educate ministers and doctors without much success until they were referred to Dr. David Wade at Galveston State Hospital. Dr. Wade was to remain a good friend of A.A. Later, he and Ed H. were to help found A.A. in Austin (see below). The Jack Alexander article in March 1941 brought in many inquiries, one of them a defrocked preacher, Howell S. and his beloved wife Molly, who also attended the meetings. Another was Ed F. who became particularly active in Twelfth Stepping the flood of prospects, along with Ed H. Early members from that time were:

Clarence "Bull" D., Earl D., Joe F., George P. (who later helped carry A.A. to Albuquerque), and an enthusiastic and energetic woman, Esther E. (who moved to Dallas and helped start A.A. there as well as afterward in San Antonio). By the end of '41, there were 85 members

Message #4844

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/4844>
"terry walton" <twalton@3gcinc.com>

Who was Betty Love?

In "The Soul of Sponsorship" by Robert Fitzgerald, S.J., page 56, in a letter written by Bill Wilson to Father Ed, he wrote:

"We'd very much like your criticisms of the material enclosed. Do we run across the grain of your ideas anywhere, do you care for the writing style and is the structural situation depicted in conformity with your observations of AA?"

Bill also mentioned he had good help from some other writers: Tom Powers, Betty Love and Jack Alexander.

My question is, who was Betty Love?

I have found zero hits on the name Betty Love on this history site.

Thank you,

Terry

Message #4766

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/4766>

REFERS TO: Message 3460 from "ArtSheehan"

<ArtSheehan@msn.com> (ArtSheehan at msn.com)

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/3460>

1953

June, the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions was published. Bill W described the work as "This small volume is strictly a textbook which explains AA's 24 basic principles and their application, in detail and with great care." Betty L and Tom P helped Bill in its writing. Jack Alexander also helped with editing. It was published in two editions: one for \$2.25 (\$15.50 today) for distribution through AA groups, and a \$2.75 (\$19 today) edition distributed through Harper and Brothers for sale in commercial bookstores.

Message #4631

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/4631>

"Arthur S" <ArtSheehan@msn.com>

[Speaking about Earl Treat, founder of AA in Chicago, Arthur said]

When Dr. Bob (his recovery Sponsor) died in 1950, Earl was his replacement on the [Alcoholic Foundation] Board of Trustees. Earl served the AF Board until 1954 (along with other pioneers William Silkworth, Jack Alexander, Bernard Smith, and others), when he returned to Chicago AA service as a Group Service Coordinator and paid employee for the Area Service Office.

Message #4206

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/4206>

<chesbayman56@yahoo.com>

Significant April Dates in A.A. History

April 1950 - Saturday Evening Post article "The Drunkard's Best Friend" by Jack Alexander.

April 7, 1941 - Ruth Hock reported there were 1,500 letters asking for help as a result of the Saturday Evening Post Article by Jack Alexander.

Message #4001

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/4001>
"Mel Barger" <melb@accesstoledo.com>

Igor I. Sikorsky, Jr. wrote a book called "AA's Godparents: Carl Jung, Emmet Fox, Jack Alexander" (Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers, 1990)

Message #3577

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/3577>
Bill Lash <barefootbill@optonline.net>

Interview With the Author of "Physician, Heal Thyself!"
Fourth in a series of articles on authors of Big Book stories
AA Grapevine, October 1995

DR. EARLE M.

Dr. Earle's story "Physician, Heal Thyself!" appeared in the Second and Third Editions of the Big Book. Dr. Earle was interviewed by telephone at his home in California by a Grapevine staff member.

".... I talk about it some in my Big Book story. The only thing I knew about AA was what I'd read in Jack Alexander's article [Saturday Evening Post, March 1941]. It said that one of the founders, Dr. Bob, was a doctor, and I'm a doctor--I'm a gynecologist and I'm also a psychiatrist--so I identified with that. On the last day of my drinking, I talked to a friend of mine about AA. My friend gave me a piece of paper and there were twenty-four or twenty-five statements on it directed toward the drinker who's planning on stopping"

Message #2182

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/2182>
<jlobdell54@hotmail.com>

The SOCIAL SECURITY DEATH INDEX shows that the John Alexander who died in St Petersburg FL on September 17 1975 was born February 8 1903, and was thus 72 years old rather than 73 as in the GRAPEVINE notice -- but I believe this was our Jack Alexander. He was thus

born on the same day that (in 1940) was the day of the famous Rockefeller dinner at the Union League Club. -- Jared Lobdell

Message #2173

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/2173>
"Charles Knapp" <cdknapp@pacbell.net>

Jack Alexander

I have been trying for some time to get more information about Jack. I have written the Sat Evening Post Archives, and they no help at all. They only knew he wrote for the magazine. I was able to find a list of articles he had written and I am including that list. I would really like to find a photo of Jack for our archives, but haven't found a good one yet. The most information I found on him was from his memorial found in the December 1975 AA Grapevine.

Hope this helps

Charles from California

December 1975 AA Grapevine

Passing of Jack Alexander

Recalls Early AA Growth

Our Fellowship has reason to be forever grateful to Jack Alexander, who died on September 17 in St. Petersburg, Fla., at 73. AA was less than six years old, with a membership around 2,000, when the reporter and magazine writer was assigned to do a Saturday Evening Post article on the obscure group of recovering alcoholics.

Jack approached the job skeptically, but ended his research as "a true AA convert in spirit," in the words of co-founder Bill W. The article (now re-printed as an AA pamphlet, "The Jack Alexander Article") was published in the March 1, 1941, issue - and by the end of that year, AA membership had reached 8,000! In the May 1945 Grapevine, Jack told the story-behind-the-story, "Were the AAs Pulling My Leg?"

During Jack's 1951-56 service as a non-alcoholic trustee on the AA General Service Board, he "added the final editorial touch" to the manuscript of the "Twelve and Twelve." He was a senior editor on the Post at his retirement, in 1964. After he and his wife (who survives him) moved to Florida, he kept in touch with AA until his health began to fail.

ALEXANDER, JACK Alphabetical

- a.. * Alcoholics Anonymous, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 1 1941
- b.. * All Father's Chillun Got Heavens, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 18 1939
- c.. * The Amazing Story of Walt Disney, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 31, Nov 7 1953
- d.. * Border Without Bayonets, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 6 1940
- e.. * Boss on the Spot, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 26 1939
- f.. * Buyer No. 1, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jun 14 1941
- g.. * Cellini to Hearst to Klotz, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 1 1941
- h.. * The Cities of America - Raleigh (30 of a series), (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 12 1947
- i.. * The Cop with the Criminal Brother, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 7 1959
- j.. * Cover Man (Norman Rockwell), (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Feb 13 1943
- k.. * The Dagwood and Blondie Man, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 10 1948; about Chic Young.
- l.. * Death Is My Cellmate (Aaron Turner), (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 2 1957
- m.. * The Drunkard's Best Friend, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 1 1950; Alcoholics Anonymous.
- n.. * Everybody's Business, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 26 1942; A great library can house romance as well as books.
- o.. * He Rose from the Rich, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 11 1939
- p.. * Iron Floats to Market, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Dec 23 1939
- q.. * "Just Call Mr. C.R.", (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Feb 1 1941
- r.. * King Hanky-Panky of Jersey, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 26 1940
- s.. * The Last Shall be First, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 14 1939
- t.. * Missouri Dark Mule (Bennett Clark), (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 8 1938
- u.. * Mr. Unpredictable (Foster Furcolo), (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 9 1958
- v.. * Nervous Ice, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 19 1941
- w.. * The Ordeal of Judge Medina, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 12 1950
- x.. * Panhandle Puck, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 1 1944
- y.. * Reformer in the Promised Land, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 22 1939
- z.. * The Restaurants That Nickels Built, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Dec 18 1954
- aa.. * Rip-Roaring Baillie, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jun 1, Jun 8 1946
- ab.. * The Senate's Remarkable Upstart (Joe McCarthy), (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 9 1947
- ac.. * Stormy New Boss of the Pentagon, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 30 1949
- ad.. * They Sparked the Carrier Revolution, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 16 1944
- ae.. * The Third Party Gets a Rich Uncle, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 3 1938
- af.. * Ungovernable Governor, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 23 1943
- ag.. * What a President They Picked, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Feb 24 1951
- ah.. * What Happened to Judge Crater?, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 10 1960
- ai.. * The World's Greatest Newspaper, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 26 1941
- aj.. * Young Man of Manhattan, (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 15 1939

ALEXANDER, JACK by Date

- a.. The Third Party Gets a Rich Uncle (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 3 1938
- b.. Missouri Dark Mule (Bennett Clark) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 8 1938
- c.. The Last Shall be First (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 14 1939
- d.. He Rose from the Rich (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 11 1939
- e.. Young Man of Manhattan (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 15 1939

- f.. Reformer in the Promised Land (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 22 1939
- g.. Boss on the Spot (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 26 1939
- h.. All Father's Chillun Got Heavens (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 18 1939
- i.. Iron Floats to Market (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Dec 23 1939
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- n.. Nervous Ice (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Apr 19 1941
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- p.. The World's Greatest Newspaper (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 26 1941
- q.. Cellini to Hearst to Klotz (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 1 1941
- r.. Everybody's Business (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 26 1942; A great library can house romance as well as books.
- s.. Ungovernable Governor (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 23 1943
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- ae.. The Amazing Story of Walt Disney (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 31, Nov 7 1953
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- ah.. Mr. Unpredictable (Foster Furcolo) (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 9 1958
- ai.. The Cop with the Criminal Brother (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Nov 7 1959
- aj.. What Happened to Judge Crater? (ar) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 10 1960

Message #2065

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/2065>

Glenn Chesnut <glennccc@sbcglobal.net>

EARLY A.A. PRISON GROUP (1944), Part 1 of 6, INDIANA STATE PRISON AT MICHIGAN CITY, Glenn C. (South Bend IN)

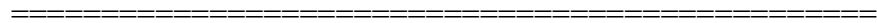
Editor's introduction: The A.A. prison group at Michigan City in Indiana (founded in 1944) together with the A.A. prison group at San Quentin in California (founded in 1942) were the two best known groups for alcoholic convicts in the United States during the early years. The one at San Quentin (where Clinton T. Duffy was the warden) was the first, and there were additional successful attempts to set up groups at other prisons during the following two years, but Warden

Alfred F. "Al" Dowd at the Indiana State Prison highly publicized the enormous success of the Indiana group among the prison wardens all over the country, and raised the Indiana program to national prominence.

The major part of the story is told here by Nick Kowalski, one of the best story tellers and most important spiritual teachers of early Hoosier A.A., who had been sent to the Indiana State Prison for a murder which he committed in a confused alcoholic rage in a house of prostitution located in the seamy district along South Michigan Street in South Bend where a good many of the city's bars and places with nude dancers could be found. He had been brought up in an orphanage and had a deformed chest from the vitamin deficiency disease called rickets which he had developed from the inadequate diet at the orphanage. Not long after the last of several suicide attempts, Nick became one of the founding members of the little A.A. prison group, but only because they got him to that first meeting by promising him a piece of raisin pie smuggled from the prison kitchen.



Sources: The following material is taken from Glenn C., "The Factory Owner & the Convict"



THE PRISON GROUP AT MICHIGAN CITY

Nick K.'s Lead: How the Group Was Begun in 1944



This material is transcribed from the tape recording of a lead given by Nick Kowalski at Ann Arbor, Michigan on February 26, 1976, contributed by Molly S., who lived with Nick in the last years of his life. Nick was in prison for murder at the time the A.A. group was started there, joined the new group, and became one of their first big success stories. After his release from prison, he not only continued to work with ex-cons for the rest of his life, but was also for many years a major leader and spiritual guide within the A.A. program in the South Bend/Mishawaka area.



Editor: In 1944, the new A.A. group in South Bend, barely a year old, was presented with a unique challenge — a request by Tim Costello, a convict at the Indiana State Prison at Michigan City, to bring the A.A. program to him there at the penitentiary. As far as the people in South Bend knew, there were no other such programs, and this was a journey onto completely uncharted ground.

We must also remember that early A.A., coming out of the Oxford Group, was definitely slanted at that time towards the upper social groups. Bill W. had been a wealthy Wall Street stockbroker before the Great Depression, and Dr. Bob was a skilled surgeon. Of the two founders in South Bend, Ken Merrill was a well-to-do factory owner and a widely published author, and Soo Cates was an engineer who served as a sales representative for a major firm. Could a program tailored

to people like these make sense at all in the totally different context of hardened convicts incarcerated in a state penitentiary?

But the South Bend A.A. people came through, and Ken Merrill along with another early member of the South Bend group, Harry Stevens, both began visiting Warden Dowd until they wore him down, and got him to let them set up an A.A. group at the penitentiary.

One of the prisoners who joined the new group was Nick Kowalski, who later earned his release and eventually became one of the legendary figures in A.A. in South Bend and the St. Joseph river valley. Since few people could tell a tale better than Nick, perhaps it is best to let him relate the story of the beginnings of the A.A. prison group in his own words:

"In 1944, a guy named Tim Costello, long dead, tore a fascinating, wonderful, God-gifted trail through the prison's A.A. program And I got to talk to you a little about Tim, because he showed me what God gives everyone:

"In this room tonight, there're people here who never seem to accomplish much in the world, because they're always busy around here, washing the dishes and cleaning up, and putting things together. And you get mad at 'em, a lot of the time, 'cause they've got pretty strict ideas about how the program works, and they'll argue, and talk to you about the things you should do, and the things you shouldn't do. And you raise hell with 'em, and say 'Lousy no good so-and-so's,' and this and that. But they're always here.

"About two weeks after they're dead, you realized they saved your life maybe fifty times. Hadn't have been for their sternness with themselves, and with you and me, their candid honesty that we need from time to time — if you're like me, clear up to tonight, including tonight — I'd have often gone off the deep end.

"We need 'em and we love 'em. And those of them that are here would know that nothing you say to 'em can pay them back, because God pays them for doing that. They don't need things from us, they need [only] the spirit of God. In the sobriety they obtain, and their companionship, and even telling you the candid truth, they gain a kind of grandeur that God gives few people on the face of the earth.

"But I think sometimes we should remember them while they're alive, and give them thanks, because if it wasn't for them, we might wouldn't be here tonight.

"And Tim was one of these people. And God provides them, you know that. He's got one for you and one for me, and here's a consummate value."

Editor: On March 1, 1941 an issue of the Saturday Evening Post appeared all over America, with Jack Alexander's story as its lead article: "Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now they Free Others." The article gave the New York A.A. address to which people could write for more information. Now, three years later, Tim Costello, a convict in the Indiana State Prison at Michigan City, read that article in an old copy of the magazine that was lying around, and realized that this was the only thing that could save his life.

"Tim went to the warden and asked if he could write a letter to A.A., and the warden said, 'What's that?' He said, 'Well, it tells you here, read the article.' And the warden said, 'I ain't

reading no article about alcoholics, I got a whole damn prison full of 'em!' [Laughter] Well Tim says, 'Can I write a letter?' 'Hell no, they're not related to you. This is a maximum security prison. The only people you can write to are relatives.'

"So Tim went back to his cell, and wrote a kite — some of you know what a kite is, it goes under the wall. It went out — in this case, the priest is dead too — it went out through a Catholic priest, then to New York. And then they got it in New York, and they sent it to South Bend, where there were four men sober — I could name 'em for you, God love 'em, here right now.

"One was named Harry Stevens. God provides that second guy, that guy for assistance — the little, mild-mannered man, who like the fish in the dam, keeps butting against the wall. Couldn't turn his head. Harry Stevens just died a few years ago, had a stack of cards this high. If he ever got a call from you — ever — he wrote your name, address, and phone number down. Once a month, he sat down and wrote you a postcard. Said, 'I was just setting down here tonight thinking about you, wondering how you are. If you ever feel like it, give me a call, I'd like to see you again.' Didn't make any difference, [if] some of them guys [wouldn't respond at first]. He wrote them cards for years. Lots of guys, four or five years later, when they got ready to come, they knew who to call. He'd be there, he'd come, he'd go. He didn't worry about himself, he put together a pretty good life.

"He come up to the prison, said that 'I'd like to talk to an inmate named Tim Costello.' The warden said, 'How do you know him?' He said, 'I got a letter from him.' [Laughter] The warden said, 'No, you can't get a letter from him.' He says, 'I can't? I got it right here.' So the warden went in, and he said to Tim, 'How'd you get that letter out, Tim?' Tim said, 'Hell, I'd never get another one out if I tell you that.' [Laughter] And he said, 'You're going into the hole.' And in the hole he went, three days in the hole.

"Seventy-two hours later, he comes out, walks around the prison saying, 'I don't know what the hell went wrong,' sat down and wrote another letter. [Laughter] To New York, went back to Harry Stevens. Harry Stevens gets the letter, he comes up to the prison, he says, 'Warden, I got to talk to that guy, I got another letter from him.' [Laughter] 'By gosh, you did, you're not gonna see him.' Goes inside, threw Tim back in the hole. [Laughter] When you was a real bad guy, they used to shave your head — shave your head, and they put you in a big checkered wool suit, and they put a little red card on your cell. That meant you were a bad man. And they locked your cell before you went out for privileges, whether it was recreation, you know, or visitors. Four months without privileges. Had lots of time, so he wrote another letter. [Laughter] God gave us some wonderful power!

"You know, a lot of people in this room once thought they were junk. And they tried to make junk out of a pretty damn good piece of equipment. You beat it to death, you ran it over a cliff, you busted up cars, you busted yourself up, you got in tragic situations. Still works pretty good! He didn't make junk. When you turn yourself over to him, he'll make you a talented man.

"And he needs every one of you, and brings you here because he needs you. And he needs you here, not to be me or somebody, or Jack or Jim or somebody, but to be YOU. Because of a special quality you have, he brings you to these tables. It ain't something that I aren't or you aren't — he brings you here 'cause he needs that quality [which you already have]. The difference in your fingerprints and mine. And he wants you to bring it, and put it on the table,

and talk about it, and converse with it, and work with us, so that there will be, between us, the quality that's open to everybody.

"So Tim writes another letter — goes to New York, comes back to Harry Stevens, Harry opens the letter, it said, 'I don't know what you guys are doing, but don't do that, you're killing me!' [Laughter] That's the kind of innocence we talk about in A.A., that kind of wonderful openness, that we do things that people will not try.

Message #1814

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/1814>

"Charles Knapp" <cdknapp@pacbell.net>

In post # 560, the December 1975 AA Grapevine article about Jack Alexander passing, it mentioned a May 1945 Grapevine article by Jack. Here is a copy of that article.

Hope you enjoy

Charles from California

**JACK ALEXANDER OF SAT EVE POST FAME
THOUGHT A.A.s WERE PULLING HIS LEG**

Grapevine Magazine, May 1945

Ordinarily, diabetes isn't rated as one of the hazards of reporting, but the Alcoholics Anonymous article in the Saturday Evening Post came close to costing me my liver, and maybe A.A. neophytes ought to be told this when they are handed copies of the article to read. It might impress them. In the course of my fact gathering, I drank enough Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, ginger ale, Moxie and Sweetie to float the Saratoga. Then there was the thickly frosted cake so beloved of A.A. gatherings, and the heavily sweetened coffee, and the candy. Nobody can tell me that alcoholism isn't due solely to an abnormal craving for sugar, not even a learned psychiatrist. Otherwise the A.A. assignment was a pleasure.

It began when the Post asked me to look into A.A. as a possible article subject. All I knew of alcoholism at the time was that, like most other non-alcoholics, I had my hand bitten (and my nose punched) on numerous occasions by alcoholic pals to whom I had extended a hand —unwisely, it always seemed afterward. Anyway, I had an understandable skepticism about the whole business.

My first contact, with actual A.A.s came when a group of four of them called at my apartment one afternoon. This session was pleasant, but it didn't help my skepticism any. Each one introduced himself as an alcoholic who had gone "dry," as the official expression has it. They were good-looking and well dressed and, as we sat around drinking Coca-Cola (which was all they would

take), they spun yarns about their horrendous drinking misadventures. The stories sounded spurious, and after the visitors had left, I had a strong suspicion that my leg was being pulled. They had behaved like a bunch of actors sent out by some Broadway casting agency.

Next morning I took the subway to the headquarters Alcoholics Anonymous in downtown Manhattan, where I met Bill W. This Bill W. is a very disarming guy and an expert at indoctrinating the stranger into the psychology, psychiatry, physiology, pharmacology and folklore of alcoholism. He spent the good part of a couple of days telling me what it was all about. It was an interesting experience, but at the end of it my fingers were still crossed. He knew it, of course, without my saying it, and in the days that followed he took me to the homes of some of the A.A.s, where I got a chance to talk to the wives, too. My skepticism suffered a few minor scratches, but not enough to hurt. Then Bill shepherded me to a few A.A. meetings at a clubhouse somewhere in the West Twenties. Here were all manner of alcoholics, many of them, the nibblers at the fringe of the movement, still fragrant of liquor and needing a shave. Now I knew I was among a few genuine alcoholics anyway. The bearded, fume-breathing lads were A.A. skeptics, too, and now I had some company.

The week spent with Bill W. was a success from one standpoint. I knew I had the makings of a readable report but, unfortunately, I didn't quite believe in it and told Bill so. He asked why I didn't look in on the A.A.s in other cities and see what went on there. I agreed to do this, and we mapped out an itinerary. I went to Philadelphia, first, and some of the local A.A. took me to the psychopathic ward of Philadelphia General Hospital and showed me how they work on the alcoholic inmates. In that gloomy place, it was an impressive thing to see men who had bounced in and out of the ward themselves patiently jawing a man who was still haggard and shaking from a binge that wound up in the gutter.

Akron was the next stop. Bill met me there and promptly introduced me to Doc S., who is another hard man to disbelieve. There were more hospital visits, an A.A. meeting, and interviews with people who a year or two before were undergoing varying forms of the blind staggers. Now they seemed calm, well-spoken, steady-handed and prosperous, at least mildly prosperous.

Doc S. drove us both from Akron to Cleveland one night and the same pattern was repeated. The universality of alcoholism was more apparent here. In Akron it had been mostly factory workers. In Cleveland there were lawyers, accountants and oilier professional men, in addition to laborers. And again the same stories. The pattern was repeated also in Chicago, the only variation there being the presence at the meetings of a number of newspapermen, I had spent most of my working life on newspapers and I could really talk to these men. The real clincher, though, came in St. Louis, which is my hometown. Here I met a number of my own friends who were A.A.s, and the last remnants of skepticism vanished. Once rollicking rumpots, they were now sober. It didn't seem possible, but there it was.

When the article was published, the reader mail was astonishing. Most of it came from desperate drinkers or their wives, or mothers, fathers or interested friends. The letters were forwarded to the A.A. office in New York and from there were sent on to A.A. groups nearest the writers of the letters. I don't know exactly how many letters came in, all told, but the last time I checked, a year or so ago, it was around 6,000. They still trickle in from time to time, from people who have carried the article in their pockets all this time, or kept it in the bureau drawer under the handkerchief case intending to do something about it.

I guess the letters will keep coming in for years, and I hope they do, because now I know that every one of them springs from a mind, either of an alcoholic or of someone close to him, which is undergoing a type of hell that Dante would have gagged at. And I know, too, that this victim is on the way to recovery, if he really wants to recover. There is something very heartening about this, particularly in a world which has been struggling toward peace for centuries without ever achieving it for very long periods of time.

Jack Alexander
The Saturday Evening Post
Philadelphia, Pa.

Message #1809
<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/1809>
"Lash, William (Bill)" <wlash@avaya.com> barefootbill69

December 1975 AA Grapevine

Passing of Jack Alexander
Recalls Early AA Growth

Our Fellowship has reason to be forever grateful to Jack Alexander, who died on September 17 in St. Petersburg, Fla., at 73. AA was less than six years old, with a membership around 2,000, when the reporter and magazine writer was assigned to do a Saturday Evening Post article on the obscure group of recovering alcoholics.

Jack approached the job skeptically, but ended his research as "a true AA convert in spirit," in the words of co-founder Bill W. The article (now re-printed as an AA pamphlet, "The Jack Alexander Article") was published in the March 1, 1941, issue - and by the end of that year, AA membership had reached 8,000! In the May 1945 Grapevine, Jack told the story-behind-the-story, "Were the AAs Pulling My Leg?"

During Jack's 1951-56 service as a non-alcoholic trustee on the AA General Service Board, he "added the final editorial touch" to the manuscript of the "Twelve and Twelve." He was a senior

editor on the Post at his retirement, in 1964. After he and his wife (who survives him) moved to Florida, he kept in touch with AA until his health began to fail.

Message #1747

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/1747>

Nancy Olson <NMOlson@aol.com>

REFERRING TO "Arthur" <ArtSheehan@msn.com>

Date: Fri Apr 9, 2004 12:32 pm

Subject: RE: [AAHistoryLovers] Traditions applied to GSO?

Mar 1, 1941: Jack Alexander's Saturday Evening Post article was published. The publicity caused 1941 membership to jump from around 2,000 to 8,000. Bill and two other members' pictures appeared full-face in the article. (AA Comes of Age viii, 35-36, 190-191, Language of the Heart 149-150, Pass It On 245-247) The article, led to over 6,000 appeals for help to be mailed to Box 658 for the NY Office to handle. (Service Manual S7, Pass It On 249) The NY office asked groups to donate \$1 (\$12 today) per member for support of the office. This began the practice of financing the NY office operations from group donations. (AA Comes of Age 112, 192, Language of the Heart 149, SM S7)

Message #1729

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/1729>

Nancy Olson <NMOlson@aol.com>

REFERRING TO: "tcumming" <tcumming@airmail.net>

Date: Mon Oct 14, 2002 10:05 pm

Subject: re: Harper Brothers

Pass It On has nice fairly succinct history of the writing of our "Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions" on pages 352-56. Far too much for this lazy alcoholic to type out the whole thing for you. But on pages 355-6 you can read:

"'Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions' was first published in two editions -- one for distribution through AA groups, and the second edition, costing 50 cents more (\$2.75 instead of \$2.25), intended for sale in commercial bookstores and distributed through Harper & Brothers (by arrangement with AA's old friend Eugene Exman). AA made a contract with Harper that enabled the Fellowship to retain full control and copyright ownership of both editions."

AA Comes of Age, page 219, also has a bit on this:

"One more noteworthy event marked this period of quiet; the publication of AA's 'Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions' in 1953. This small volume is strictly a textbook which explains AA's twenty-four basic principles and their application, in detail and with great care.

"Helped by my editorial team, Betty L. and Tom P., I had begun work on this project in early 1952. The final draft was widely circulated among our friends of medicine and religion and also among many old-time AA's. This rigorous checkup was topped off by none other than Jack Alexander, who had added the final editorial touch. For group distribution we published the volume ourselves, and our old friend Gene Exman of Harper offered favorable terms for distribution through his firm to bookstores."

I'll also include a quote from earlier in AA Comes of Age, pertaining to the publishing of the Big Book, which may well have had an influence on this volume as well. On page 158:

"... But Henry was not discouraged. He still had ideas. 'Bill,' he said, 'you and I know this book is going to sell. And Harper thinks it will sell. But these New York drunks just do not believe it. Some take it as a joke, and the rest talk high and holy about mixing a spiritual enterprise with money and promotion.'"

Other references pertaining to Harpers include:

AA Comes of Age - 153, 156, 158, 219

Language of the Heart - 143-4

Pass It On - 193, 194, 195, 356

(BTW, it is not too difficult to look these up in the index at the back of the books)

That's the official word. Now with salt shaker in hand:

What I think I remember being told about Harper publishing the 'Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions' is that it was set up that way to soothe some of those complaints. Where GSO would publish and distribute copies for the fellowship, and Harpers would handle it for those outside the fellowship. That way GSO wouldn't have to engage in promoting the book to bookstores, and money from outside sources wouldn't get mixed in with our self support funds (Traditions 11 & 7).

It seemed like a good plan, but in reality it just didn't work.

At first Harpers did OK with the book, but eventually some bookstores and institutions outside AA found they could get the book cheaper through GSO than through their regular channels. Printing, distribution and publicity costs may also have gone up. In the end, what I remember being told, Harper's sales were down, costs were up and they knew they had to raise the price to make a profit. They also knew that GSO wasn't going to raise the price. They made the simple business decision that it wasn't profitable to publish the book anymore and they stopped. And so ended our experiment with split distribution, 'within the fellowship' vs. outside the fellowship.

Message #1705

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/1705>

From: Nancy Olson <NMOlson@aol.com>

[LETTER FROM BILL WILSON TO JIMMY BURWELL]

W.G.W.

Box 459 Grand Central Annex

New York 17, N.Y.

December 9, 1940

Dear Jimmy,

Sorry you couldn't get up. I was away and so missed Bill Wells.

Jack Alexander expects to be in Philadelphia all day next Sunday. He would like to see Drs. Hammer and Saul and also the man in charge of alcoholics at the Philadelphia General Hospital. Will let you know just when he will arrive and may come down myself, proceeding with him, Sunday night to Akron where he will also take in the Cleveland group, going from there to Chicago and finally writing his article at St. Louis, which is his home town. This schedule is still tentative so will keep you posted.

Wes Northridge tells me there is another opening in your out-fit and he expects to interview your Mr. Carns (?) about it within a day or two. If you feel you can, I wish you would write this gentleman and put in a good word for Wesley with your boss. Some months ago I would not have done this for I have learned to be careful about pushing people too hard for jobs under some conditions.

But in this case I feel very different. There has been a really miraculous transformation in Wes. It is one of the most remarkable things I have ever seen and I am positive that it is going to stick. Lois and I rode with him over to the Rockland meeting the other night when we had a good chance to talk for a long time. All of the cockiness and disagreeable egotism is a thing of the past. Moreover, he had laid hold of the spiritual angle in a big way. So I am willing to bet on him without any reservation whatever. As you know he has held some swell jobs and is usually competent to make the kind of industrial survey you are selling.

Please find enclosed a copy of my report to the Trustees. Ruth is away in Cleveland and I can't give you Kathleen Parkhurst's address.

Give all the boys my best together with greetings from the whole New York group who appreciated the telegram from the Philadelphia group. Though we haven't framed the telegram, it hangs on the bulletin board big as life.

Be seeing you soon.

As ever,

/s/ Bill

MEMOIRS OF JIMMY THE EVOLUTION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
By Jim Burwell

The next outstanding event in Alcoholics Anonymous growth was the publication of the Saturday Evening Post article. This was mostly arranged through the efforts of two well-known Philadelphia physicians, Dr. C. Dudley Saul and Dr. A. Wiese Hammer. They had gained the

interest of Judge Curtis Bok, one of the owners of the Saturday Evening Post and in the early days of Philadelphia AA, Judge Bok had been a constant visitor to the group. It was in a large part due to his interest that Jack Alexander was assigned to do a feature article on Alcoholics Anonymous in August 1940. We were later told that the editors also thought Alexander would be a good man to possibly "expose" this new "screwball" organization. However, Alexander did promise that he would not write his article until he had visited groups and seen AA in action. He traveled from New York and Philadelphia as far West as St. Louis and attended AA meetings. His experience with these groups made him so enthusiastic over the AA setup that the article he wrote was responsible for the largest sale of a single issue of the Post in its history. The Alcoholic Foundation office in New York reports that over 10,000 inquiries were received from this one article. Even today people coming into AA groups in various parts of the country tell us that their first knowledge of Alcoholics Anonymous was the Saturday Evening Post article by Jack Alexander.

It is my guess that in March 1941 there were less than 1,000 active AA members in the Country and the following year we added at least seven or eight thousand members.

Message #161

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/161>

From: Nancy Olson <NMOlson@aol.com>

I am very grateful to Gary P. and Hugh M. who arranged for the us to have access to this Interview, Courtesy of Chicago Area Nineteen Archives, and to Gigi D. who transcribed it. It may contain some factual errors. (None of our memories are perfect, which is why I regret I did not keep a diary in my early years in AA.) Nonetheless, I think the Interview is well worth posting.

Interview with Katie T. (Non Alcoholic), Wife of Earl T. (Chicago's 1st AA)

Conrad: Conrad 0, alcoholic and the date is July 29, 1985, and I am interviewing Katie T., non-alcoholic, who is the wife of Earl T., the first AA in the Chicago area

Then, when there were 25 people, we felt we had grown enough. And I say "we" because, we were the non-alcoholics, but included in this. But it was not our program, per se.

So Earl went down and talked to someone at the Medical and Dental Arts Building, and he made a deal with them, that if they would give us their lounge to set 25 or 50 people and have a meeting, we would use their restaurant and guarantee 25 meals. And I was in charge of the meals, and I used to stand at the darn counter, because we had to have 25 people.

The roast beef dinners were 75 cents, and 10 cents for a tip. Most of us couldn't afford that because most of us were broke. It was all we could do to afford coffee and cake.

But they were well attended, and we had a little publicity by Jack Alexander, and then they began to come in. At that time, we rose from 25 to 50, and then we went to different places that were larger, and finally ended up at the Engineering Building, where we could have hundreds.

Message #50

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/50>

From: Nancy Olson <NMOlson@aol.com>

"Let's Ask Bill" No. 32 -- What led to the Twelve Traditions?

From Jim Blair.

Q - What were the conditions that led to the Twelve Traditions?

A - After the Jack Alexander article was published in 1941 it brought down a deluge on our little New York office of thousands upon thousands of inquiries from frantic alcoholics, their wives, their employers and at that moment we passed out of our infancy and embarked upon our next phase -- the phase of adolescence.

Well, adolescence by definition is a troubled time of young life and we were no exception as groups began to take shape all over the land and these groups immediately had trouble. We made the very sad discovery that just because you sobered up a drunk you haven't made a saint out of him by a long shot. We found that we could be bitterly resentful and we discovered that we had a much better booze cure than we thought possible. A lot of us found that we could gripe like thunder and still stay sober. We found that we were in all sorts of petty struggles for leadership and prestige. A lot of us were very suspicious of the Book enterprise in the hands of that fellow Wilson who has a truck backed up to Mr. Rockefeller who has all the dough. And we began to have all sorts of troubles.

Money had entered the picture -- it had to. We had to hire halls that didn't come for nothing, the book cost something, we had dinners once in a while. Yes, money came into it.

Then we found little by little that the groups had to have chores done. Who was going to be the Chairman, would we hand pick him or elect him or what? You know what those troubles were and they became so fearsome that we went through another period of flying blind. The first period of flying blind you remember had to do with whether the individual could be restored into one piece, whether the forces of destruction in him could be contained and subdued. Now, we were beginning to wonder in the early part of our adolescence, whether the destructive forces in our groups would rend us apart and destroy the society. Ah, those were fearsome days.

Our little New York office began to be deluged with mail from these groups, growing up at distances and not in contact with our old centers and they were having these troubles: There were people coming out of the insane asylums. Lord, what would these lunatics do to us? There were prisoners, would we be sandbagged? There were queer people. There were people, believe it or not whose morals were bad and the respectable alcoholics of that time shook their heads and said, "Surely these immoral people are going to render us asunder." Little Red Riding Hood and the bad wolves began to abound. Ah, yes, could our society last?

It kept growing, more groups, more members. Sometimes the groups divided

because the leaders were mad at each other and sometimes they divided because they were just too big. But by a process of fission and subdivision this movement grew and grew and grew. Ten years later it had spread into thirty countries.

Out of that vast welter of experience in our adolescence it began to be evident that we were going to take very different attitudes towards many things than our fellow Americans. We were deeply convinced for example, that the survival of the whole was far more important than the survival of any individual or group of individuals. This was a thing far bigger than any one of us. We began to suspect that once a mass of alcoholics were adhering even halfway to the Twelve Steps, that God could speak in their Group conscience and up out of that Group conscience could come a wisdom greater than any inspired leadership.

In the early days we all had membership rules. Where have they gone now? We're not afraid anymore. We open our arms wide, we say we don't care who you are, what your difficulties are You just need say, "I'm an alcoholic and I'm interested." You declare yourself in. Our membership idea is put exactly in reverse.

Years ago we thought this society should go into research and education, to do everything for drunks all the time. We know better now. We have one sole object in this society, we shoemakers are going to stick to our last and we will carry that message to other alcoholics and leave these other matters to the more competent. We will do one thing supremely well rather than many things badly.

And so our Tradition grew. Our Tradition is not American tradition. Take our public relations policy. Why, in America everything runs on big names, advertising people. We are a country devoted to heroism, it is a beloved tradition and yet this movement in the wisdom of it's Group's soul, knew that this was not for us. So our public relations policy is anonymity at the public level. No advertising of people, principles before personalities. Anonymity has a deep spiritual significance -- the greatest protection this movement has.

As our society has grown up it has developed its way of life, it's a way of relating ourselves together, it's way of relating ourselves to these troublesome questions of property, money and prestige and authority and the world at large. The A.A. Tradition developed not because I dictated it but because you people, your experience formed it and I merely set it on paper and tried beginning four years ago (1946) to reflect it back to you. Such were our years of adolescence and before we leave them I must say that a powerful impetus was given the Traditions by the Gentleman who introduced me. (Earl Treat.)

One day he came down to Bedford Hills after the long form of the Traditions were written out at some length because in the office we were forever having to answer questions about Group troubles so the original Traditions were longer and covered more possibilities of trouble. Earl looked at me rather quizzically and he said "Bill, don't you get it through your thick head that these drunks do not like to read. They will listen for a while but they will not read anything. Now, you want to capsule these Traditions as simply as are the Twelve Steps to Recovery."

So he and I started the capsulizing process, which lasted a day or two and that put the Traditions into their present form. Well, by this time we had a lot of experience on these principles, which we began to think might bind us together in unity for so long as God might need us. And at Cleveland (1950), seven thousand of us did declare "Yes, these are the traditional principles

upon which we are willing to stand, upon which we can safely commit ourselves to the future and so we emerged from adolescence.

Again, last year we took destiny by the hand. (Transcribed from tape. Chicago, IL, February 1951).

Message #9

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAHistoryLovers/message/9>

From: Nancy Olson <NMOlson@aol.com>

Saturday Evening Post Article March 1941, How It Came About

In March 1941, a feature article entitled "Alcoholics Anonymous" appeared in the "Saturday Evening Post." This is how it came about.

Jim Burwell ("The Vicious Cycle" in the Big Book) had just moved to Philadelphia and was trying to get a local bookstore to carry the Big Book. The bookstore's manager was uninterested, but the conversation was overheard by a woman named Helen Hammer.

She spoke up and said she had sent the book to her alcoholic nephew in Los Angeles, who had sobered up instantly and had stayed that way for some three months. But the store manager remained unimpressed.

When Mrs. Hammer heard of Jim's attempt to start a group in Philadelphia, she introduced him to her husband, Dr. A. Weise Hammer.

Dr. Hammer was a friend of Judge Curtis Bok, the owner of the Saturday Evening Post. He persuaded Bok to do a story on A.A. Bok urged his editors to assigned Jack Alexander, an experienced, even cynical reporter, to do a feature story.

Alexander was chosen because he had a reputation for being "hard nosed." He had just completed a major story exposing the New jersey rackets and prided himself on his cynicism.

Alexander had many doubts about doing a story on a bunch of ex-drunks. In a story he wrote for the A.A. Grapevine in May 1945 ("Was My Leg Being Pulled?") he said: "All I knew of alcoholism at the time was that, like most other nonalcoholics, I had had my hand bitten (and my nose punched) on numerous occasions by alcoholic pals to whom I had extended a hand -- unwisely, it always seemed afterward. Anyway, I had an understandable skepticism about the whole business."

But he spent a week with Bill Wilson and other AA members in New York. "We gave him the most exhaustive briefing on Alcoholics Anonymous any writer has ever had," according to Bill. "First he met our Trustees and New York people, and then we towed him all over the country."

One of the people he interviewed in New York was Marty Mann, the first woman

to achieve lasting sobriety in AA. (See "Women Suffer Too" in the Big Book.) She is called "Sara Martin" in the story, and she is disguised further by changing her time in London to time in Paris. But Sarah Martin is without doubt, Marty Mann. When the story came out Marty said "it was the most exciting thing that had ever happened, because we wanted publicity so badly. We wanted somebody to know about us."

Alexander felt the week was a success from one standpoint. "I knew I had the makings of a readable report," he wrote, "but, unfortunately, I didn't quite believe in it and told Bill so." But Bill convinced him that he should visit other cities to visit groups, and interview and get to know other members.

Bill, Dr. Bob and elders of the groups at Akron, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Chicago spent uncounted hours with him. But when he reached his own home town of St. Louis, he met a number of his own friends who were now A.A. members, and the last remnants of skepticism vanished. "Once rollicking rumpots, they were now sober. It didn't seem possible, but there it was," he wrote.

When Alexander "could feel A.A. in the very marrow of his bones," he proceeded to write the story that rocked drunks and their families all over the world.

"Came then the deluge," Bill wrote. Six thousand frantic appeals from alcoholics and their families hit the New York office, PO Box 658. Bill and Ruth Hock, AA's first secretary, pawed at random through the mass of letters, laughing and crying by turns. But it was clear they couldn't handle the mail by themselves, and form letters wouldn't be enough. Each letter had to have an understanding personal reply.

Fortunately, they had anticipated this problem and Lois Wilson, in anticipation of the story bringing a strong response, had been organizing anyone who could type into squads, and scheduling those who could not type to answer the telephones in preparation for the expected deluge.

But even so, the response exceeded anyone's wildest expectations. Within days, meeting attendance doubled. Within weeks, newcomers were being sent out on Twelve Step calls to other alcoholics. Ruth Hock and Bobbie Berger, along with Lois and her volunteers, worked day and night for five or six weeks to answer all the mail.

The chain reaction Bill had envisioned when he was still a patient at Towns Hospital had become a fact, and nothing would stop it. A.A. was now established as an American institution.

Bill realized that he must, for the first time, ask the groups for assistance. It was determined that if each group gave \$1 a year per member, they would eventually have enough money to pay the New York office's expenses and rely no further upon outside charity or insufficient book sales. Most groups were happy to contribute to pay the expense of the New York office, and most continue to do so today.

Thus the tradition of self-support had a firm beginning.

The magazine's decision to do a feature story on A.A. would have been enough for editors all across the country to find A.A. newsworthy, but the story didn't stop with merely reporting on AA. It endorsed its effectiveness. It is hard for us today to imagine the enormous excitement that this article generated among A.A. members. By 1950, AA membership was approaching a hundred thousand and there were thirty-five hundred groups worldwide.

In April of that year the Saturday Evening Post featured another article by Alexander entitled the "Drunkards Best Friend."

In 1953 Alexander became a member of the Alcoholic Foundation's board of trustees. He wrote articles for the A.A. Grapevine and helped Bill edit "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions." He was truly a great friend of Bill's and of A.A.

AA has World Services has reprinted the article regularly in pamphlet form, at first under its original title, and now as "The Jack Alexander Article."

"How well we love that Jack" wrote Bill in 1951. "We should all be grateful to Jack Alexander, one of AA's earliest friends from the press."

The Jack Alexander articles follow in the net posts.

Sources:

"Bill W." by Robert Thomsen

"Bill W." by Francis Hartigan.

"Pass It On."

"The Language of the Heart, Bill W.'s Grapevine Writings."

"Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers."

"Best of the Grapevine, Volume II."