



The Santa Barbara

March 2006

MESSENGER

12 Steps in 30 Minutes

AAs are always asking: “Where did the Twelve Steps come from?” In the last analysis, perhaps nobody knows. Yet some of the events which led to their formulation are as clear to me as though they took place yesterday.

So far as people were concerned, the main channels of inspiration for our Steps were three in number—the Oxford Groups, Dr. William D. Silkworth of Towns Hospital, and the famed psychologist, William James, called by some the father of modern psychology. The story of how these streams of influence were brought together and how they led to the writing of our Twelve Steps is exciting and in spots downright incredible.

Many of us will remember the Oxford Groups as a modern evangelical movement which flourished in the 1920s and early 30s, led by a one-time Lutheran minister, Dr. Frank Buchman. The Oxford Groups of that day threw heavy emphasis on personal work, one member with another. AA’s Twelfth Step had its origin in that vital practice. The moral backbone of the “OG” was absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love. They also practiced a type of confession, which they called “sharing;” the making of amends for harms done they called “restitution.” They believed deeply in their “quiet time,” a meditation practiced by groups and individuals alike, in which the guidance of God was sought for every detail of living, great or small.

These basic ideas were not new; they could have been found elsewhere. But the saving thing for us first alcoholics who contacted the Oxford Groupers was that they laid great stress on these particular principles. And fortunate for us was the fact that the Groupers took special pains not to interfere with one’s personal religious views. Their society, like ours later on, saw the need to be strictly nondenominational.

In the late summer of 1934, my well-loved alcoholic friend and schoolmate “Ebbie” had fallen in with these good folks and had promptly sobered up. Being an alcoholic, and rather on the obstinate side, he hadn’t been able to “buy” all the Oxford Group ideas and attitudes. Nevertheless, he was moved by their deep sincerity and felt mighty grateful for the fact that their ministrations had, for the time being, lifted his obsession to drink.

When he arrived in New York in the late fall of 1934, Ebbie thought at once of me. On a bleak November day he

rang up. Soon he was looking at me across our kitchen table at 182 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, New York. As I remember that conversation, he constantly used phrases like these: “I found I couldn’t run my own life;” “I had to get honest with myself and somebody else;” “I had to make restitution for the damage I had done;” “I had to pray to God for guidance and strength, even though I wasn’t sure there was any God;” “And after I’d tried hard to do these things I found that my craving for alcohol left.” Then over and over Ebbie would say something like this: “Bill, it isn’t a bit like being on the water-wagon. You don’t fight the desire to drink—you get released from it. I never had such a feeling before.”

Such was the sum of what Ebbie had extracted from his Oxford Group friends and had transmitted to me that day. While these simple ideas were not new, they certainly hit me like tons of brick. Today we understand just why that was... one alcoholic was talking to another as no one else can.

Two or three weeks later, December 11 to be exact, I staggered into the Charles B. Towns Hospital, that famous drying-out emporium on Central Park West, New York City. I’d been there before, so I knew and already loved the doctor in charge—Dr. Silkworth. It was he who was soon to contribute a very great idea without which AA could never have succeeded. For years he had been proclaiming alcoholism an illness, an obsession of the mind coupled with an allergy of the body. By now I knew this meant me. I also understood what a fatal combination these twin ogres could be. Of course, I’d once hoped to be among the small percentage of victims who now and then escape their vengeance. But this outside hope was now gone. I was about to hit bottom. That verdict of science—the obsession that condemned me to drink and the allergy that condemned me to die—was about to do the trick. That’s where medical science, personified by this benign little doctor, began to fit in. Held in the hands of one alcoholic talking to the next, this double-edged truth was a sledgehammer which could shatter the tough alcoholic’s ego at depth and lay him wide open to the grace of God.

In my case it was of course Dr. Silkworth who swung the sledge while my friend Ebbie carried to me the spiritual principles and the grace which brought on my sudden spiri-

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Just the Facts

Things at Your Central Office are fine. Both literature sales and donations were up for 2005. I credit this to the IGRs who have gotten the word out to group treasurers and to the supporting members who have been so faithful in their donations. It all counts, but if it were not for the relatively small group of dedicated individuals who make up the SMC (Supporting Member Club), this office would not be open to serve the needs of the rest of the sober community. That's just a fact.

We publish the stats for the office every month on page 6. Take a look at those and you will see that, here again thanks to a small dedicated group, the volunteers, we do a lot of business here on a regular basis. Phone calls get answered, meeting guides are published, and literature is available. More important, the alcoholic who reaches out has a place to come. It doesn't happen that often, but occasionally someone will come in and ask if they can just sit for a while because they are having a hard time. That always seems to make it worth keeping the doors open, even if all that other stuff wasn't also being handled. Some of the

other things people do when they stop by:

1. Purchase literature, pamphlets, and chips for individuals, groups, and service committees.
2. Update meeting information.
3. Sign up for the 12th Step list.
4. Out-of-towners touch base with the fellowship and find meetings.
5. Newcomers find a temporary sponsor.
6. Find out about ways to be of service in AA, like H&I, or GSR, or IGR.
7. Borrow tapes from our library.

These are a few examples of what it is we attempt to provide. We would love to see you at any time, so please feel free to stop by any time we are open.

Tim

Supporting Member Donation Coupon

I would like to become a supporting member of the Santa Barbara AA Central Office, and help it continue to carry the message and be there for the alcoholic who still suffers. I look forward to finding my monthly newsletter in the mail each month! Enclosed is my first contribution of \$ _____. I will continue to donate this amount on a (circle one) monthly, quarterly, annual, other _____ basis.

I am already a supporting member. This is my regular contribution of \$ _____.

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please make check payable to: **AA Central Office, S.M.C.**
1213 State Street, Suite H
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Every AA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions. —Seventh Tradition (short form), reprinted by permission of AA World Services, Inc.

The Third Step Prayer

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!

Tradition Three Contemplation Questions

Tradition Three: The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my AA group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
4. Do I let language, religion (or the lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I over impressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA, needing information or help (even if he can't ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what he does for a living? Where he lives? What his domestic arrangements are? Whether he has been to AA before? What his other problems are?

—Originally published in the *AA Grapevine*

Concept III

As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the groups, the Conference, the AA General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs, committees and executives, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

—*AA Service Manual*

Letter

Closing Prayers

The closing prayer at every meeting is very powerful to me. Over the years, I have tried to never leave a meeting early because it feels incomplete to me without the closing prayer and a hug or two. I try to stay aware that AA is meant to be inclusive, never exclusive, and nothing demonstrates that principle more than all holding hands in a circle, joining together saying a “simple” prayer. Simple, because it’s important to afford everyone an opportunity to join in and feel the spiritual connection. Most newcomers learn the Serenity Prayer soon after becoming members, if they don’t already know it. It may be awhile before the newcomer can join in to say the Third Step Prayer, Eleventh Step Prayer, and The Lord’s Prayer. For this reason, I prefer closing with the Serenity Prayer.

The Responsibility Declaration is a wonderfully powerful affirmation, but it is not a prayer, and I, for one, would miss closing the meetings with anything other than the spiritual connection which comes from the group prayer.

—Luwana K

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tual awakening at the hospital three days later. I immediately knew that I was a free man. And with this astonishing experience came a feeling of wonderful certainty that great numbers of alcoholics might one day enjoy the priceless gift which had been bestowed upon me.

Third Influence

At this point a third stream of influence entered my life through the pages of William James' book, *[The] Varieties of Religious Experience*. Somebody had brought it to my hospital room. Following my sudden experience, Dr. Silkworth had taken great pains to convince me that I was not hallucinated. But William James did even more. Not only, he said, could spiritual experiences make people saner, they could transform men and women so that they could do, feel, and believe what had hitherto been impossible to them. It mattered little whether these awakenings were sudden or gradual; their variety could be almost infinite. But the biggest payoff of that noted book was this: *in most of the cases described, those who had been transformed were hopeless people. In some controlling area of their lives they had met absolute defeat.* Well, that was me all right. In complete defeat, with no hope or faith whatever, I had made an appeal to a higher Power. I had taken Step One of today's AA program—"admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable." I'd also taken Step Three—"made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we understood him." Thus was I set free. It was just as simple, yet just is mysterious, as that.

These realizations were so exciting that I instantly joined up with the Oxford Groups. But to their consternation I insisted on devoting myself exclusively to drunks. This was disturbing to the OGs on two counts. Firstly, they wanted to help save the whole world. Secondly, their luck with drunks had been poor. Just as I joined they had been working over a batch of alcoholics who had proved disappointing indeed. One of them, it was rumored, had flippantly cast his shoe through a valuable stained glass window of an Episcopal church across the alley from OG headquarters. Neither did they take kindly to my repeated declaration that it shouldn't take long to sober up all the drunks in the world. They rightly declared that my conceit was still immense.

Something Missing

After some six months of violent exertion with scores of alcoholics which I found at a nearby mission and Towns Hospital, it began to look like the Groupers were right. I hadn't sobered up anybody. In Brooklyn we always had a houseful of drinkers living with us, sometimes as many as five. My valiant wife, Lois, once arrived home from work to find three of them fairly tight. The remaining two were worse. They were whaling each other with two-by-fours. Though events like these slowed me down somewhat, the persistent conviction that a way to sobriety could be found never

seemed to leave me. There was, though, one bright spot. My sponsor, Ebbie, still clung precariously to his new-found sobriety.

What was the reason for all these fiascoes? If Ebbie and I could achieve sobriety, why couldn't all the rest find it too? Some of those we'd worked on certainly wanted to get well. We speculated day and night why nothing much had happened to them. Maybe they couldn't stand the spiritual pace of the Oxford Group's four absolutes of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. In fact some of the alcoholics declared that this was the trouble. The aggressive pressure upon them to get good overnight would make them fly high as geese for a few weeks and then flop dismally. They complained, too, about another form of coercion—something the Oxford Groupers called "guidance for others." A "team" composed of non-alcoholic Groupers would sit down with an alcoholic and after a "quiet time" would come up with precise instructions as to how the alcoholic should run his own life. As grateful as we were to our OG friends, this was sometimes tough to take. It obviously had something to do with the wholesale skidding that went on.

But this wasn't the entire reason for failure. After months I saw the trouble was mainly in me. I had become very aggressive, very cocksure. I talked a lot about my sudden spiritual experience, as though it was something very special. I had been playing the double role of teacher and preacher. In my exhortations I'd forgotten all about the medical side of our malady, and that need for deflation at depth so emphasized by William James had been neglected. We weren't using that medical sledgehammer that Dr. Silkworth had so providentially given us.

Finally, one day, Dr. Silkworth took me back down to my right size. Said he, "Bill, why don't you quit talking so much about that bright light experience of yours? It sounds too crazy. Though I'm convinced that nothing but better morals will make alcoholics really well, I do think you have got the cart before the horse. The point is that alcoholics won't buy all this moral exhortation until they convince themselves that they must. If I were you I'd go after them on the medical basis first. While it has never done any good for me to tell them how fatal their malady is, it might be a very different story if you, a formerly hopeless alcoholic, gave them the bad news. Because of the identification you naturally have with alcoholics, you might be able to penetrate where I can't. Give them the medical business first, and give it to them hard. This might soften them up so they will accept the principles that will really get them well."

Then Came Akron

Shortly after this history-making conversation, I found myself in Akron, Ohio, on a business venture which promptly collapsed. Alone in the town, I was scared to death of getting drunk. I was no longer a teacher or a preacher, I was an alcoholic who knew that he needed another alcoholic, as much as that one could possibly need me. Driven by that

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urge, I was soon face to face with Dr. Bob. It was at once evident that Dr. Bob knew more of spiritual things than I did. He also had been in touch with the Oxford Groupers at Akron, But somehow he simply couldn't get sober. Following Dr. Silkworth's advice, I used the medical sledgehammer. I told him what alcoholism was and just how fatal it could be. Apparently this did something to Dr. Bob, On June 10, 1935, he sobered up, never to drink again. When, in 1939, Dr. Bob's story first appeared in the book, *Alcoholic Anonymous*, he put one paragraph of it in italics. Speaking of me, he said: "*Of far more importance was the fact that he was the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience*".

The Missing Link

Dr. Silkworth had indeed supplied us the missing link without which the chain of principles now forged into our Twelve Steps could never have been complete. Then and there, the spark that was to become Alcoholics Anonymous had been struck.

During the next three years after Dr. Bob's recovery our growing groups at Akron, New York, and Cleveland evolved the so-called word-of-mouth program of our pioneering time. As we commenced to form a society separate from the Oxford Group, we began to state our principles something like this:

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol
 We got honest with ourselves
 We got honest with another person, in confidence
 We made amends for harms done others
 We worked with other alcoholics without demand for prestige or money
 We prayed to God to help us to do these things as best we could

Though these principles were advocated according to the whim or liking of each of us, and though in Akron and Cleveland they still stuck by the OG absolutes of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love, this was the gist of our message to incoming alcoholics up to 1939, when our present Twelve Steps were put to paper.

I well remember the evening on which the Twelve Steps were written. I was lying in bed quite dejected and suffering from one of my imaginary ulcer attacks. Four chapters of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, had been roughed out and read in meetings at Akron and New York. We quickly found that everybody wanted to be an author. The hassles as to what should go into our new book were terrific. For example, some wanted a purely psychological book which would draw in alcoholics without scaring them. We could tell them about the "God business" afterward. A few, led by our wonderful southern friend, Fitz M., wanted a fairly religious book infused with some of the dogma we had picked up from the churches and missions which had tried to help us. The louder these arguments, the more I felt in the middle.

It appeared that I wasn't going to be the author at all. I was only going to be an umpire who would decide the contents of the book. This didn't mean, though, that there wasn't terrific enthusiasm for the undertaking. Every one of us was wildly excited at the possibility of getting our message before all those countless alcoholics who still didn't know.

Having arrived at Chapter Five, it seemed high time to state what our program really was. I remember running over in my mind the word-of-mouth phrases then in current use. Jotting these down, they added up to the six named above. Then came the idea that our program ought to be more accurately and clearly stated. Distant readers would have to have a precise set of principles. Knowing the alcoholic's ability to rationalize, something airtight would have to be written. We couldn't let the reader wiggle our anywhere. Besides, a more complete statement would help in the chapters to come where we would need to show exactly how the recovery program ought to be worked.

12 Steps in 30 Minutes

At length I began to write on a cheap yellow tablet. I split the word-of-mouth program up into smaller pieces, meanwhile enlarging its scope considerably. Uninspired as I felt, I was surprised that in a short time, perhaps half an hour, I had set down certain principles which, on being counted, turned out to be twelve in number. And for some unaccountable reason, I had moved the idea of God into the Second Step, right up front. Besides, I had named God very liberally throughout the other steps. In one of the steps I had even suggested that the newcomer get down on his knees

When this document was shown to our New York meeting the protests were many and loud. Our agnostic friends didn't go at all for the idea of kneeling. Others said we were talking altogether too much about God. And anyhow, why should there be twelve steps when we had done fine on six? Let's keep it simple, they said.

This sort of heated discussion went on for days and nights. But out of it all there came a ten-strike for Alcoholics Anonymous. Our agnostic contingent, speared by Hank P. and Jim B., finally convinced us that we must make it easier for people like themselves by using such terms as "a Higher Power" or "God as we understand Him." Those expressions, as we so well know today, have proved lifesavers for many an alcoholic. They have enabled thousands of us to make a beginning where none could have been made had we left the steps just as I originally wrote them. Happily for us there were no other changes in the original draft and the number of steps still stood at twelve. Little did we then guess that our Twelve Steps would soon be widely approved by clergymen of all denominations and even by our latter-day friends, the psychiatrists.

This little fragment of history ought to convince the most skeptical that nobody invented Alcoholics Anonymous.

It just grew...by the grace of God
 —Bill W., Grapevine, July 1953



February Birthdays

Deno	1
Patrick D	1
Clare R	1
Kristin B	2
Allen O	2
Patrick N	2
Larry	4
Peter D	7
Brad D	8
Sally M	9
Barton H	10
Lowell B	15
Peggy F	15
Brian S	22
Jim F	22
Evans S	24
John K	26
Joan S	26
Carlton P	36
Eva D	42

The Messenger is published monthly by:

23rd District Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous
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Submissions Needed

The Messenger needs your submissions and letters. We especially seek submissions on the step or tradition associated with the month of the same number. For the third month, April, we need writing on Step 4 and Tradition 4. Send submissions to jimstoic@hotmail.com.

Central Office Statistics

During January your Central Office had:

AA information calls	736
Al-Anon	33
Referrals to other programs	47
12-step via answering service	48
Out-of-town visitors	9
12-step via office	8
Office walk-ins	498
Hits on our Web site	611

Service Meetings

GSRs (Group Service Representatives) meet at 6:00 P.M. the first Monday each month at the Cottage Hospital, Conference Rooms E and F.

IGRs (Intergroup Representatives) meet at 6:00 P.M. the second Tuesday each month at First Presbyterian Church, 21 E Constance, in Santa Barbara.

H&I (Hospitals & Institutions) meets at 6:00 P.M. the second Monday each month at the Central Office.

PI (Public Information) meets the fourth Saturday of each month. Call 687-7673 for more information.

Santa Barbara Recovery Trivia

What was the name of the first women's recovery house in Santa Barbara? (Answer in next month's *Messenger*.)

Answer to last month's question:

What was the name of the first men's recovery house in Santa Barbara? New House, on Chapala Street, in 1955.

February 2006 Financials

	<u>February</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>2006</u>		<u>February</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>2006</u>
003 Eye Opener	270.00	305.00	575.00	112 Montecito/ Carpinteria	0.00	130.00	130.00
004 Monday At A Time	0.00	173.66	173.66	113 Sought Through Prayer & Meditation	9.00	0.00	9.00
006 Start Your Week Right	0.00	60.00	60.00	114 Schooner Group	0.00	277.00	277.00
007 Sound Off	0.00	60.00	60.00	115 Eleventh Step Meditation	16.71	13.00	29.71
010 Foundation Group	67.00	65.00	132.00	117 Way Of Life	225.00	375.00	600.00
025 Grateful Group	0.00	120.00	120.00	120 Sat. Morn. Home Boys	0.00	138.05	138.05
034 Women of Change	70.00	37.62	107.62	130 Saturday Night Sobriety	72.00	0.00	72.00
035 12 & 12 Study, Tues.	0.00	60.00	60.00	141 Off Center	0.00	325.00	325.00
036 Tuesday Trudgers	100.00	0.00	100.00	144 Back To Basics, Young People	54.00	0.00	54.00
052 As Bill Sees It, Weds.	71.29	0.00	71.29	149 Getting To Know You	0.00	83.00	83.00
053 Both Oars In The Water	0.00	60.00	60.00	164 Men Who Have Lost Their Legs	415.00	0.00	415.00
055 Staying Alive	20.00	130.30	150.30	165 Junkyard Dogs	68.61	36.30	104.91
062 Do The Steps Or Die	40.16	46.23	86.39	166 Serenity Sisters	0.00	58.00	58.00
064 Women's Serenity Group	50.00	0.00	50.00	170 Barefoot Group	15.00	16.00	31.00
067 Rigorous Honesty	12.00	20.00	32.00	181 Keep Coming Back Group	0.00	169.69	169.69
068 Stepping Stones	0.00	56.00	56.00	183 Summerland, Thurs.	0.00	293.30	293.30
071 The Loft	350.00	0.00	350.00	186 Turning Point	528.00	0.00	528.00
074 Casa Serena (BB Study)	6.00	0.00	6.00	200 Anonymous Donations	0.00	46.00	46.00
076 11th Step	15.00	60.00	75.00	201 Birthday Donations	0.00	19.00	19.00
079 Harbor Group	376.04	788.63	1,164.67	202 Supporting Member	619.00	1,659.00	2,278.00
091 New Life	240.00	0.00	240.00	203 SBYPAA	0.00	105.65	105.65
093 Into Action, Thurs	0.00	30.00	30.00	204 Memorial Fund	0.00	100.00	100.00
097 Almost Saints	0.00	115.00	115.00	211 Central Office Rent Received	175.00	155.00	330.00
099 Sink Or Swim	0.00	60.00	60.00	TOTAL	\$3,884.81	\$6,246.43	\$10,131.24

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