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SOBER DAZE

July– September 2017 A 12TH District Publication

Sobriety vs. Abstinence

Recently in a meeting, a man who had been “trying” unsuccessfully to get sober for over 20 years announced that it was “day 20” of “abstinence.” Everyone dutifully clapped but I am not sure if they really heard his choice of words—“abstinence” vs. sobriety. However, this was not lost on me.

I often wonder if one’s attitude about those two words, which are very similar, but oh so different, can keep a person from attaining lasting freedom from alcohol. I ask myself why is it that some people come into the Fellowship, admit their powerlessness, get a sponsor, and on the outside seem like they will make it, only to disappear time and time again. Sometimes they come back in with a new resolve to do better this time, only to be out there a few short months later. I suspect it is their attitude. I ask: Do they feel they cannot manage alcohol? Do they come into the program to “get people off their backs?” Do they come in for their marriage or to get their children back? Although these seem like good enough reasons, unless you want to get sober for yourself, nothing will change in your life. Saving your marriage or getting custody of your children are some of the many side benefits of being sober but unless you are committed to working a real program, even after you get your job or family back, and not resorting to old behaviors, you will be forever stuck in that revolving door. Unless your attitude is one of sobriety, which is putting effort and time into working a program, rather than merely abstaining from alcohol, hanging on by the skin of your teeth or white knuckling it, you may not drink for a while, but your prognosis is very poor. Maybe my life isn’t what I want, and I have seen tragedies but I know that when I go into a meeting, the sadness and anxiety often fall away, at least for that one hour, giving me time to reassess. When I wanted to drink, attending a meeting gave me that feeling of “ease and comfort” and I found I could cope without taking that first disastrous drink. Merely “abstaining” from anything implies that it is punitive, while being sober implies a gift—an amazing gift. When we think of sobriety in that way, our chances increase that some day we will be celebrating decades of solid sobriety one day at a time.

- Marilyn B (Editor)

Pioneer of AA – Dr. William Silkworth

**The Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks
A.A. Grapevine, Inc., May, 1951**

A drunk is lying on a bed in a hospital, and a doctor is sitting beside the bed. The drunk is talking earnestly to the doctor. "...a wave of depression came over me," the drunk is saying. "I realized that I was powerless - hopeless - that I couldn't help myself, and that nobody else could help me. I was in black despair. And in the midst of this, I remembered about this God business... and I rose up in bed and said, "If there be a God, let him show himself now!" A doctor specializing in alcoholism hears all kinds of crazy stories from drunks in all stages of de-fogging. You'd expect him to have his tongue in his cheek at this point). "All of a sudden, there was a light," the drunk goes on, "a blinding white light that filled the whole room. a tremendous wind seemed to be blowing all around me and right through me. I felt as if I were standing on a high mountain top..." (You'd think a doctor would become hardened after listening to these drunks rave day after day. It's a discouraging, thankless field... alcoholism). The drunk continued: "I felt that I stood in the presence of God. I felt an immense joy. And I was sure beyond all doubt that I was free from my obsession with alcohol. The only condition was that I share the secret of this freedom with other alcoholics and help them to recover."

The drunk paused and turned to the doctor. "Ever since it happened, I've been lying here wondering whether or not I've lost my mind. Tell me, doctor - am I insane - or not?"

The drunk was Bill W. Fortunately for Bill — fortunately for A.A. — fortunately for the thousands of us who have come after - the doctor was Dr. Silkworth. By great good luck - or by the grace of God (depending upon your viewpoint) - the doctor was Dr. Silkworth. It would have been so easy to dismiss Bill's experience as hallucination, one of the many possible vagaries of a rum-soaked brain. And a disparaging word from the doctor right at this point could have choked off the tender shoot of faith and killed it. Alcoholics Anonymous might have got started somewhere else, somehow. Or it might not. Certainly it wouldn't have started here. Very possibly the life of every one of us A.A.'s hung on the doctor's answer to the question, "Am I insane?" It was there that Dr. Silkworth made the first of his indispensable contributions to A.A. He knew - by an insight that no amount of medical training alone can give a man - that what had happened to Bill was real, and important. "I don't know what you've got," he told Bill, "but whatever it is, hang on to it. You are not insane. And you may have the answer to your problem." The encouragement of the man of science, as much as the spiritual experience itself, started A.A. on its way. When Dr. Silkworth died of a heart attack in his home in New York early in the morning of March 22nd, even those A.A.s who knew him best and loved him most awoke to the realization that we had lost a greater friend, a greater doctor, a greater man than we had ever realized. It was particularly hard to appreciate the greatness of the man while Dr. Silkworth was yet with us, because of his profound personal modesty and the disarming gentleness, the unassuming and almost invisible skill, with which he accomplished his daily miracles of medical and spiritual healing. We know that he was a prodigious and relentless worker, but still it was a shock to discover that in his lifetime of work with those who suffer our disease, he had talked with 51,000 alcoholics - 45,000 at Towns Hospital and 6,000 at Knickerbocker!

Yet he was never in a hurry. And he had no "formulas," no stock answers. Somehow he found out very early that the unexpected was to be expected in alcoholism, and for a man who knew as many of the answers as he did, he came to each new case with a wonderfully open mind... the great and classic example of which is his handling of Bill. And this gentle little doctor with his white hair and his china blue eyes - child's eyes, saints eyes - was a man of immense personal courage. It must be remembered that he went much farther than merely encouraging Bill's faith in his spiritual experience, he saw to it that Bill was permitted to come back into Towns Hospital to share his discovery with other alcoholics. Today - when "carrying the message to others" has become a very respectable part of an undeniably effective program - it is easy to forget that "carrying the message" in the beginning was a highly unorthodox undertaking. It

Faithful Fivers

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"Faithful Fivers" are A.A. members who, in gratitude, contribute five dollars a month toward supporting the 12th District Central Office. With this support, the Central Office pays for the printing of this publication and, when you enroll, will make sure it is delivered to your home when the issue comes out.

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Excerpt from a pamphlet entitled "Letter to a Woman Alcoholic."

The article was originally printed in GOOD HOUSEKEEPING in 1954. Back then I believe there was much more of a stigma involved with a woman being a "drunk" than with a man.

This story shows how insidious alcoholism is, even when you have escaped it as a younger person. Alcoholism is very patient and can wait and lurk within you, only to appear at just the right time, sometimes later in life. This story is a prime example:

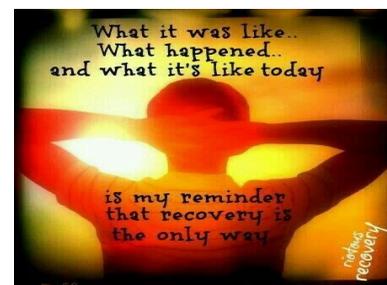
To show you how complete is the allergy in some alcoholics, I'd like to tell you the story of a grandmother, whom I'll call Jane, who took the first drink of her life when she was fifty-nine years old. It was at a bridge party with some new neighbors. The other guests had only a glass or two of punch, but Jane couldn't seem to get enough of it. In fact, before the party broke up, the hostess mixed her several cocktails, for it seems most amusing to see the proper little middle-aged woman suddenly go crazy about drinking. By the time Jane's husband, Jim called for her she was hilariously making a nuisance of herself.

Jim got her home and into bed, and she fell immediately to sleep. But just as she was dropping off, she said, "Jim, we've missed the best part of life. Tomorrow I'm going to mix you some nice cocktails."

The next morning Jane went boldly into her package store and bought a bottle of rye. Her intention was to have one drink, for medicinal purposes, and to save the rest for cocktails to show Jim what they had been missing. But the one drink led Jane straight through the bottle. She was an alcoholic, completely and fully developed, just waiting for the first drop to set her off.

From that day on she was a problem drinker, completely out of control. At first it seemed screamingly funny that this could have happened to such a little homebody. But before a month had passed, both Jim and she knew that she was in real trouble. Her sons couldn't believe what had happened; it sounded too fantastic. But there was no doubt about her alcoholism, for nothing else mattered to her but her day's quart. Her minister prayed over her; her daughters-in-law kept the grandchildren out of her sight; her physician gave her a drug, Antabuse [intended to discourage drinking]. But that nearly killed her when, in spite of warnings, she drank alcohol immediately afterward.

Six horrifying years followed. When she couldn't get money any other way, she went out on the street and begged for it. She sold her clothes, stole from her husband, and even got a job cleaning up a cocktail lounge, "for drinks." The day she was picked up by the police as drunk and disorderly, she hit bottom. Then, all by herself, she went to an A.A. meeting. It was the beginning of the way back.



had no precedent and no history of success; most authorities would have turned thumbs down on it as just plain screwball.

Again, we forget how our technique has been mellowed and refined by the wisdom of experience. We know that the blinding light and the overwhelming rush of God-consciousness are not necessary, that they are indeed very rare phenomena and that the great majority of recoveries among us are of the much less spectacular gradual and educational kind. But in the beginning, the "hot flash" was stressed - nay, insisted upon. Dr. Silkworth had his professional reputation to lose, and nothing whatever to gain, by permitting and encouraging this unheard-of procedure of one God-bitten drunk trying to pass on his strange story of a light and a vision to other alcoholics - most of whom at that time received it with lively hostility or magnificent indifference.

Then Bill met Dr. Bob, and the first few drunks, incredulously, began to make their incredible recoveries. The infant society, without a book, without a program really, and without a reputation or standing of any kind - began its growth. We forget how halting and feeble that early growth was, how bedeviled with obstacles in a world skeptical of spiritual experience and often hostile to it.

Dr. Silkworth from the beginning threw all of his weight as a doctor, a neurologist, a specialist in alcoholism, into aiding the progress of this mongrel and highly unpedigreed society in every possible way. He committed social and professional heresy right and left in order to publish and implement his burning faith in a movement which as yet only half-suspected its own destiny and which had to grope rather blindly to find terms for its own faith in itself. When there was need for money to publish the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Dr. Silkworth used his personal influence without stint to help raise the money. As a preface to the book he wrote the chapter titled, "The Doctors Opinion," giving A.A. his praise and approval without reservation or qualification- at a time when there were only a thin one hundred of us dried up! He was indeed our first friend, and indeed a friend in need. His faith in us was firmer than our faith in ourselves. Bill says: "Without Silky's help, we never would have got going - or kept going!" Again, his contribution was indispensable.

Why did he do it? The answer to that is the answer to Dr. Silkworth's whole career: he loved drunks. Why he loved drunks is a secret known only to God and the doctor - and perhaps the doctor himself did not wholly understand the mystery. "It's a gift," he used to say, his eyes twinkling.

He discovered his gift very early in his medical practice. He was graduated from Princeton in 1896, and took his medical degree at New York University in 1900. Then he interned at Bellevue; and it was while working at Bellevue that he found he was drawn to alcoholics, and they to him.

When nobody else could calm a disturbed drunk, Dr. Silkworth could. And he found, rather to his amazement, that even the toughest and most case-hardened of drunks would talk to him freely - and that many of them, even more amazingly, wept. It became evident that he exerted - or that there was exerted through him - some kind of thawing influence on the life-springs of the alcoholic.

Yet the years that followed were full of discouragement. There were two years on the psychiatric staff at the U.S. Army Hospital at Plattsburg, N.Y., during the first world war, followed by several years on the staff of the Neurological Institute of the Presbyterian Hospital in New York. Twice he entered into private practice, only to be drawn back into hospital work with alcoholics. His work continued on at Charles B. Towns Hospital, New York, a private hospital specializing in alcoholism and drug addiction. Here, Dr. Silkworth's special skill with alcoholics - and his growing understanding and love for them had full scope. Yet he estimated that the percentage of real recoveries among the alcoholics he worked with was only about 2 per cent. The large number of hopeless cases, and the deep degrees of human tragedy and suffering involved, weighed heavily upon the gentle doctor. He was often profoundly discouraged. Then came Bill - and A.A. One who has known the doctor intimately over many years has said this about it: "Silky never told me this. It's my own opinion. But I believe that A.A. was Silky's reward. All those years he plodded along - treating drunks medically - defending them - loving them - and not getting anywhere much. And then God said: "All right, little man, I'm going to give you and your drunks a lift!" And when the lighting struck, there was Silky, right where he belonged - in the midst of it!" Early in his career, at a time when alcoholism was almost universally regarded as a willful and deliberate persistence in a nasty vice, Dr. Silkworth came to believe in the

essential goodness of the alcoholic. "These people do not want to do the things they do," he insisted. "They drink compulsively, against their will." One of the early drunks whom Dr. Silkworth treated, a big husky six-footer, dropped on his knees before the doctor, tears streaming down his face, begging for a drink. "I said to myself then and there," Dr. Silkworth related, - this is not just a vice or habit. This is compulsion, this is pathological craving, this is disease!" He loved drunks - but there was nothing in the least degree fatuous or sentimental about that love. It could be an astringent love, an almost surgical love. There was the warmest of light in those blue eyes, but still they could burn right through to the bitter core of any lie, any sham. He could see clean through egotism, bombast, self-pity and similar miserable rags that we drunks use so cleverly to hide our central fear and shame. All this he did - without hurting anyone. While insisting rigorously that recovery was possible only on a moral basis - "You cannot go two ways on a one-way street" - he never preached, never denounced, never even really criticized. He brought you, somehow, to make your own judgements of yourself, the only kind of judgments that count with an alcoholic. How did he do it? "It's a gift." Just coming into his presence was like walking into light. He not only had vision - he gave vision. There is not room here - nor has there been opportunity for the necessary research - to consider his status as a medical man. It can be said that he held a position of very high eminence in his profession. He encountered opposition to some of his views, and he was latterly the recipient of very widespread recognition and praise for his work. It is literally true that he was the world's greatest practical authority on alcoholism. His pioneering work in the concept of alcoholism as a manifestation of allergy has been validated by later experience and has been the subject of a great deal of medical interest and research just recently. Dr. Silkworth's was a great contribution to the establishment and development of the alcoholic treatment center at Knickerbocker Hospital in New York. In later years, he was sought out for consultation and advice by doctors and by those in charge of state and city alcoholic treatment projects. There was a steady stream of visitors, some of them from foreign lands. Also, every day, there were long distance telephone calls from those seeking further help, those seeking his advice - all over the U.S. There remain these things to be noted: Dr. Silkworth was a small man, well under medium height. His complexion was ruddy. His remarkable eyes have been mentioned. His hair was snow white and no member of A.A. knew him otherwise, for he was already well along in years when our relationship began. You would say that the habitual expression of his face was a smile you thought about it, and realized that the features were really nearly always in repose, and the impression of a smile arose actually from a certain light about his face. (Too many of us have noticed it to be mistaken!) He loved to be well dressed - was, in fact, quite dapper - and in this he was not without a certain whimsical and self-recognized vanity. Nurses - the hospital staff - everyone who worked with him quite plainly and simply adored him. He was unfailingly gentle, courteous, thoughtful. He was happily married, and he and Mrs. Silkworth shared a delight in growing things - in flowers - in gardening. He was utterly and completely indifferent to money, to position, to personal gain or prestige of any kind. He was a saintly man. We drunks can thank Almighty God that such a man was designated by the divine Providence to inspire and guide us, individually and as a group, on the long way back to sanity. And now - in this anonymously written journal of an anonymous society - I hope I may be permitted, in closing, the anomaly of a personal note. You see, Dr. Silkworth saved my life. I was one of those "hopeless" ones whom he reached and brought back to life - to A.A. - and to God. And I have wanted very much to write this tribute faithfully and well, in the name of all those who share my debt and gratitude. And yet I have realized from the beginning that this article will please nobody. To those who knew and loved the saintly doctor, it will seem insufficient. And so, some of those who didn't know him will think it overdone, for the truth about Dr. Silkworth is strong medicine in a materialistic age. This dilemma would be tolerable, were it not for a third difficulty: I have written all along in the uneasy knowledge that what is said here is by no means pleasing to the doctor himself. The incident of physical death certainly has not placed him beyond knowledge of what goes on here below. And that he will not be pleased with all this, because while he was stern about very few things, he was sternly and seriously opposed to the publication of his own name

Tips for Sobriety and Serenity – Next 10 Tips for July through September

71. Avoid getting too hungry
72. Listen
73. Share your pain
74. Choose positive thinking
75. Be available for service
76. Look for similarities rather than differences
77. Beware of phony pride
78. Try to replace guilt with gratitude
79. Avoid self-righteousness
80. Keep it simple

AA Quotes

"It will take time to clear away the wreck. Though old buildings will eventually be replaced by finer ones, the new structures will take years to complete."
— Alcoholics Anonymous

"...one of the primary differences between alcoholics and non-alcoholics is that non-alcoholics change their behavior to meet their goals and alcoholics change their goals to meet their behaviors."
— Alcoholics Anonymous

"There is an island of opportunity in the middle of every difficulty."
— Alcoholics Anonymous

"Selfishness, self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self, which later placed us in a position to be hurt. So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making."
— Alcoholics Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous - Big Book*

NEW BEGINNING

First Name	Sobriety Date
Kenny R	7/7/2016
John V	8/26/1998
Liz M	8/20/1984
Kay W	9/3/2012

NEW PERCEPTIONS

First Name	Sobriety Date
Chuck F	7/1/1986
Randy M	7/16/2014
Chuck S	8/8/2001
Richie B	8/15/2012
Tracy F	8/25/2008
Kim J	8/29/2014
Josh C	8/29/2014
Dennis D	9/15/1991
Lynn B	9/7/1981

NO NIPPING NOONERS

First Name	Sobriety Date
No current info provided	

SOUTHSIDE

Name	Sobriety Date
No current info provided	

SUNLIGHT of THE SPIRIT

First Name	Sobriety Date
No info	

THOMSON

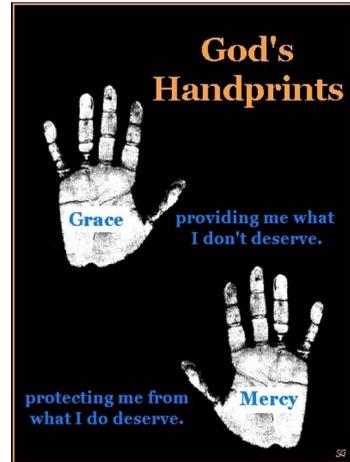
First Name	Sobriety Date
No current information	

Too SLEEPY to DRINK

First Name	Sobriety Date
No current info provided	

WASHINGTON

First Name	Sobriety Date
Alex A	7/5/2014
Sonny S	7/25/2002



About the Birthday List—Note from Editor

I make every effort to include everyone's AA Birthdays in every SDs issue as accurately as possible. Unfortunately I can only print what I have. I am asking that I receive the Quarterly Birthdays one month after the issue comes out. For example: This issue comes out April 1st, so I WILL NEED THE Birthday list for July in May. Your cooperation is appreciated.

The best option is to provide the Central Office with an ANNUAL Birthday list each January with the most current information. Then I would not have to ask for the list each Quarter. Thanks for your cooperation.

- Marilyn B.

and fame. I take comfort, however, in the fact that his sense of humor most certainly will have survived his recent transition to a new home. And I feel sure that his disapproval of the present essay will be tempered by amusement, and by the priceless gift he gave us all so freely while he was yet as we are his great love.

Why We Call it The Big Book – AA History

A printer in Cornwall, NY, named Edward Blackwell, had been highly recommended to Bill Wilson. Blackwell was the President of Cornwall Press. So Bill and Hank Parkhurst (author of the personal story "The Unbeliever" in the first edition of the Big Book) went to Cornwall to see Blackwell. There they were told that the book would probably be only about four hundred pages when printed. That seemed a bit skimpy. They wanted to sell the book for \$3.50 per copy. That was a very large sum in those days, probably the equivalent of about \$50 today, and people might not think they were getting their money's worth. They picked the cheapest, thickest paper the printer had, and requested that each page be printed with unusually large margins surrounding the text. This made for an unusually large book. Thus, the book came to be nicknamed the "Big Book."

Blackwell had an excess of red material for the bindings, so he offered them a special deal. Eager to save costs, Bill and Hank agreed. They also thought, according to some reports, that the color red would make the book more attractive and marketable.

A New York AA member named Ray Campbell, a recognized artist, was asked to design the dust jacket. His story, "An Artist's Concept", appears in the Big Book's first edition. He submitted various designs for consideration including one which was blue and in an Art Deco style. The one which was chosen was red, and yellow, with a little black, and a little white. The words Alcoholics Anonymous were printed across the top in large white script. It became known as the "Circus" jacket because of its loud circus colors. The unused blue jacket is today in the Archives at the Stepping Stones Foundation.

The first printing was the only one on which a red binding and the red "Circus" dust jacket was used. All the other printings of the first edition, except for the fourth printing, were in various shades of blue. The fourth printing, due to another overstock of binding material and thus, lower cost, was bound in blue as well as in green.

Bill Wilson, Hank Parkhurst, Dorothy Snyder (Clarence Snyder's Wife) and Ruth Hock, Bill's secretary, went to the little hamlet of Cornwall many times to oversee the printing and correct the galley before the final galley were approved as ready for printing.

Despite all their efforts at proofreading, there was a typographical error in the first printing. On page 234, the second and third line from the bottom was printed twice. This was corrected in the second printing.

Bill, and finally the Alcoholic Foundation, raised the necessary funds to cover the initial printing costs, as Ed Blackwell could not roll the presses until, and unless, they came up with at least enough money to cover the cost of the paper.

A run of four thousand seven hundred and thirty copies rolled off the press in April 1939. Two-hundred seventy-nine books were distributed without charge. In rare book auctions today in 2001, a first printing Big Book will command well in excess of \$10,000. About 8 years ago a "virgin" first printing Big Book in the original sealed shipping box was bought at auction for well over \$10,000, and the buyer did not even open the box to verify the book was inside, as it is more valuable in the sealed box. Members today continue to hope that more copies of first edition printings will be found and brought to light, instead of collecting dust in some attic or basement. First edition printing dates are given in "[The First Edition Big Book Stories](#)" at "[Printing History of the First Edition](#)"

A reproduction of the first printing can be [purchased](#) today and it is much taller and thicker than our current Big Book, although it has fewer pages.

- Written by Nancy O

