

TRADITION 1

(Taken from excerpts from the books "*12 Steps and 12 Traditions* and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*")

Tradition 1: OUR COMMON WELFARE SHOULD COME FIRST; PERSONAL RECOVERY DEPENDS UPON A.A. UNITY

The 12 traditions are to group survival and harmony what A.A.'s 12 steps are to each member's sobriety and peace of mind.

Ours is not the usual success story; rather it is the story of how, under God's grace, an unsuspected strength has arisen out of great weakness; of how, under threats of disunity and collapse, worldwide unity and brotherhood have been forged. In the course of this experience we have evolved a set of traditional principles by which we live and work together and relate ourselves as a fellowship to the world around us. These principles are called the 12 traditions of AA. They represent the distilled experience of our past, and we rely on them to carry us in unity through the challenges and dangers which the future may bring.

It was not always so. In those early days we saw that it was one thing for a few alcoholics to get well, but the problem of living and working together was something else. Therefore it was in to an uncharted future that we looked from the window of D. Bob's living room in 1937 when we first realized that alcoholics might be able to get well in large numbers. Could we recovered alcoholics hold together? Could we carry A.A.'s message? Could we function as groups and as a whole?

In 1941 we were operating with only the benefit of casual contacts, travelers going from one place to another, letters from the office, one pamphlet and one book. Could we, on that slender basis, form ourselves into a group that could function and hang together? Alcoholics in 2's or 3's were tough enough, but if they were gathered into much larger groups, what then? There had already been a frightening proliferation of the problems of mushrooming groups; quarrels over leadership, money, membership, and the like; imitations of A.A.'s name, panhandling, and even romancing...the present danger of disunity and collapse grew to frightening proportions. We could only do our best, and lead the way to God.

At first nearly every alcoholic who had begun to slip, if indeed he sobered up at all. Others would stay sober for a year or two and then take a skid. This was always a genuine catastrophe. We would look on each other and say "who next?" We were afraid that alcohol might completely undo us. Today we see tens of thousands of members completely sober for 5, 10, 15 or even 20 years. It is not an easy serious difficulty, but as a group we can take them in stride. Fear has evaporated. The danger that once threatened the individual, but we know that it can not destroy the collective self.

Against this background we shall now consider those 12 traditions, the vital principles upon which the survival of A.A. heavily depends.

A.A.'s traditions were not drawn and put into paper until 1946.

The unity of A.A. is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole or A.A. dies. The A.A. member has to conform to the principles of recovery. His life actually depends upon obedience to spiritual principles. Neither he nor anybody else can do it on his own. He carries the A.A. message. The moment this 12th step work forms a group, another discovery is made – that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. Realization dawns that he is but a small part of a great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the fellowship.

Thus it has been with A.A. By faith and by works we have been able to build upon the lessons of incredible experience. They live today in the 12 traditions of A.A., which - God willing – shall sustain us in unity for so long as we may need us.

IT BECOMES PLAIN TO US THAT THE GROUP MUST SURVIVE OR THE INDIVIDUAL WILL NOT.