

Sixth Tradition

Long form. = Problems of money, property and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs A.A. managers are preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. – and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.

Clubs in A.A. are they here to stay

When A.A. was very young they would meet in homes. Alcoholics and their families came from miles, not only for the meeting but for fellowship. They would sit up for hours at coffee, and cake, and eager, intimate talk.

As A.A. began to grow the homes became too small to break up into so many little meetings, so we went out and looked for a larger place. They rented a room at Steinway Hall. The room held the meeting and they had a cafeteria for fellowship. But they still were missing something. It was the home atmosphere. So a member suggested let's have a club.

The first club was the former Artist and Illustrators Club on West 24th Street. A couple of older members signed the lease. They painted it and scrubbed it we had a home.

But with growth there was pain. Dictators ran amuck, drunks fell on the floor or disturbed meetings. "Steering committees" tried to steer their friends to succeed them but found great resistance. Card players just played cards and didn't think about the new guy. Sometimes rent would scarcely get paid; card players would just play cards and get aggravated when ask to help a newcomer. Lady Secretaries would get in each other's hair. A corporation was formed to take over the club room lease so then we had officials.

We found the use of money, the need for a certain amount of club organization, and the crowded intimacy of the place still created situations we hadn't anticipated. Club life still had great joys. But it had liabilities too. Was it worth all the risk and trouble? The answer was yes.

Our first club was known, as an A.A. clubhouse. The corporation holding its lease was titled "Alcoholics Anonymous New York, Inc." That was a mistake only later did we realize that we had incorporated the whole of New York State. Our incorporation should have covered 24th Street only. Most A.A. clubs throughout the country have started out like ours did. At first we regarded them as A.A. institutions. But later experience invariably brings a shift in their status. a shift much to be desired.

For example, the early Manhattan A.A. club had members from every section of the metropolitan area, including New Jersey. After a while Dozens of groups sprang up in our suburban districts. So these outlying groups originally spawned from the Manhattan club house began to acquire hundreds of members who were not tied to Manhattan either. They had their own local A.A. friends, their own convenient gathering places. They weren't interested in Manhattan.

Irked little New Yorkers. Since we nurtured them why, shouldn't they be interested. Wasn't the club running a central meeting with speakers from other groups and maintaining a paid secretary who took phone calls and made hospital arrangements? Though many outlying A.A. members personally contributed to the 24th Street Club, nary a cent did their respective groups ever send in. Groups didn't support the club or its area secretary. So for a long time, our area needs, our common A.A. problem, and our club management were tied into a trying financial and psychological snarl.

The tangle slowly began to unravel. Hectic experience has since taught that if an A.A. rotating committee tries to boss the club corporation or if the corporation tries to run the A.A. affairs of those groups who meet at the club there is a difficulty at once. We began to see that club management ought to be strictly the business of those individuals who want clubs and were willing to pay for them. We began to see that club management is a large business proposition which ought to be separated under another name. The only way we have found to cure this is to *separate the material from the spiritual*. If A.A. groups wish to use a given club, let them pay rent or split the meeting take with club management. If an A.A. group wishes to use a given club, let them pay rent or split with club management. Early incorporation is recommended because it will save much confusion later on.

Who elects business directors of a club? Does club membership vary from A.A. membership? How are clubs supported and financed. We feel that any A.A. member ought to feel free to enjoy the ordinary privileges of an A.A. club, whether he makes voluntary contributions to the club or not. If he does make regular contributions, he should in addition be able to vote at their business meetings which elect their directors of his club corporation. This would open all clubs to all A.A.'s. But would limit their business conduct to those who are interested enough to contribute regularly

Eventually every area realizes that intergroup meetings, hospital arrangements, local public relations, a central office for interviews and information, are things in which every A.A. is interested, whether he has use for clubs or not. These being strictly A.A. matters a central or intergroup committee has to be elected and financed to look after them.

Groups of an area will usually with group funds these truly central activities. Even though the club is still large enough for intergroup meetings and these meetings are still held, the center of gravity for the area will continue to shift to the intergroup committee and its central activities. The club is left definitely outside, where in the opinion of many it should be. Actively supported and managed by those who want clubs, they can be taken or left alone.

A.A. Tradition how it developed pg 16-19

In Conclusion

When A.A. was very young we were growing and we out grew our meeting places. They had to find another spot so they rented Steinway Hall, but at Steinway they were missing the home atmosphere. So they got a club on 24th street. There were serious growing pains people tried to Dictate, Drunks were disruptive, secretaries fought, people played cards instead of helping others and a corporation was formed to take over the rooms lease so we had officials. At first we were incorporated by New York State only later did we realize that wasn't any to smart.

New York refused to recognize the Manhattan Club as the A.A. center for the metropolitan area. There were individual contributions but no group donations. The club thought at least they should pay the salary of the area secretary. But groups couldn't separate the area secretary from the club.

We began to see that club management ought to be the responsibility of the A.A.'s who want the club and not the club it. The affairs of the club are strictly the clubs and not A.A.'s. But any A.A. member can enjoy the club but only members who make regular contributions to the club can participate in their business meetings. The club should not accept large sums of money from any source.