

CASQ

Culture Alcohol & Society Quarterly
Newsletter of Kirk/CAAS Collections at Brown

Vol. IV no. 4 July/August/September 2009

This eighteenth new issue of the CA&SQ (since its revival in October 2004) is Volume IV, no. 4. The Editor apologizes again for an (excessively) over-late appearance. We begin with “News and Notes,” with “News” looking at an item in the Los Angeles Times on alcohol and hip-hop culture (excerpted from the Kettil Bruun Society website), and two “Notes”—one on Sterling P., an A.A. on the 1937 Akron “road trip” by New York A.A.s, and one on John Henry Fitzhugh “Fitz” M., from a recorded conversation between Bill W and Fitz’s widow, Ruth or “Arabella”). After the “News and Notes” we print material from the *A.A. Grapevine* from 1944-5, and then the final part of the editor’s paper on the History and Historiography of A.A., still as preparation for the still forthcoming contribution on writing A.A. history, by Glenn Chesnut and Trysh Travis. This is followed by no. 26 in “Washingtonian Notes and Queries,” reprinting the 1945 *Grapevine* article that introduced the Washingtonians to A.A., with notes and comments. Next issue (IV, 5) will see a report on the publication of the printer’s copy of the 1939 First Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (“the Big Book”) – an advantage to running behind our official publication date (*The Book That Started It All* is due out in September 2010), more early *Grapevine* material, new *olla podrida*, more WN&Q, and, as usual, contributions on current work at Brown, plans for future work, and results of past work, from the collections and by those on this listserv. All receiving CASQ are invited to contribute notes, queries, studies, and data on work in progress. – Jared Lobdell, *September 30, 2009* (rev. *July 2010*)

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News: Culture and Alcohol, or, Hip-Hop, Rap, and Booze

This newsletter is called the *Culture Alcohol & Society Quarterly*, and this news item from the *L.A. Times* seems highly instructive, particularly when linked to the popularity of the songs and artists mentioned here in what might be called the *Facebook* sub-culture, and the possibilities of high correlations between (especially teen-age) heavy *Facebook* communication and heavy use of alcohol (and drugs).

The year rap got drunk: 2009's best hip-hop songs about booze

[Chris Lee] Los Angeles *Times*, December 16, 2009

“At street level, ’09 will go down in the annals [as] the year hip-hop finally plunged face-first into full-blown alcoholism.... Mainstream rap went giddy, downright hiccupping drunk, glorifying alcohol consumption. This year, the pop charts were awash with MCs and R&B crooners extolling the virtues of chasing a buzz and winding up wasted – hopefully with some kind of sexual conquest to offset the bar bill... auto-tune savant T-Pain and Crunk’s capo di tutti capos, Lil Jon, emerged as this year’s preeminent champions of booze-sozzled hip-hop... herewith, the top nine ... most alcoholic-enabling hip-hop songs of the year.

“**Shots**” – LMFAO featuring Lil Jon. Jägerbombs, lemon drops, Jello shots and kamikazes as well as premium liquors such as Ciroc Vodka and the rappers’ de facto favorite (judging by its ubiquity in hip-hop songs since 2006) Patrón tequila all get a shout-out on this Crunk-inflected club-banger. Even if the song’s “we came to party” ethos is hardly groundbreaking, its hook remains unforgettable: Lil Jon hoarsely screaming the word “shots!” sixteen times in a row.

“**Blame It**” – Jamie Foxx featuring T-Pain: “Blame it on the Goose, got ya feelin’ loose / Blame it on the ‘trón, catch me in a zone / Blame it on the a-a-a-a-alcohol,” Foxx sings with no small amount of added Auto-tune attitude in this boudoir jam that was all but inescapable on Top 40 radio earlier this year. Yes, he is talking about Grey Goose and Patrón. But later in the song, he lays bare his reasoning: by continuing to fill a potential love interest’s cup, she’s more likely to lose her inhibitions – “Fill another cup up / Feelin’ on your butt what?”

“**Crack a Bottle**” – Eminem featuring Dr. Dre and 50 Cent. “So crack a bottle / Let your body waddle / Don’t act like a snobby model / You just hit the Lotto,” Em sing-raps on the chorus of this party track. The operative thinking here conflates sobriety with snootiness and getting wasted with winning a lottery jackpot.

“**Crazy Night**” – R. Kelly featuring R. City: “This Hennessy got me,” R. Kelly croons on the lead cut from his latest album, “Untitled.” Then he gets to the chorus: “If you’re drinkin’ what I’m drinkin’, put your hands up in the sky / If you’re thinkin’ what I’m thinkin’, you’ll say, ‘What a crazy night!’ ” But R’s consumption hardly stops there. In the song, he also brags of a “thousand dollar” bar tab, concluding, “I need another shot of that Bacardi” – recklessly ignoring the inevitability of a hangover such booze mixing will provoke.

“**Maldito Alcohol**” – Pitbull Reggaeton was no stranger to hip-hop’s reigning dipsomania. Exhibit A: Boriquan rapper Pitbull spitting lyrics (in Spanish) such as “I don’t want water / I want a drink”. . . “Damn alcohol, sweet torment / Give me a drink on the rocks.”

“Wasted” – Gucci Mane: “Party, party, party, let’s all get wasted,” the rapper exhorts on this single. “Shake it for me baby girl, do it butt naked / I’m so wasted, she so wasted / Tell the bartender send me 20 more cases.” The discrete charms of this hit single don’t end with the incontrovertible logic of its chorus, however. Mane also presumes the intoxication of certain notorious pop divas, mentioning that the booze has got him “geeking like Whitney and Britney.”

“Patrón Tequila” – the Paradiso Girls featuring Lil Jon. We can all agree that Crunkmeister Lil Jon was the man behind this year’s most unabashedly pro-booze music. On this paean to rap’s preferred tippie, though, the Paradiso Girls make vocal a silken threat: “By the end of the night, I’mma have you drunk and throwin’ up.”

“One More Drink” – Ludacris: an unapologetic ode to putting on one’s “beer goggles,” “One More Drink’s” narrative drama revolves around the ramifications of Luda having that proverbial one too many. Drunk driving and bedding ugly women ensues: “Surrendered to the woman / And her bringin’ me home / Because she looked better / Every shot of Patrón.”

“I’m So Gone (Patrón)” – Chamillionaire featuring Bobby Valentino: Chamilly and Bobby Valentino go for the obvious couplet here, rhyming “I’m poppin’ bottles of Patrón” with “all night long.” For the rapper, it’s clear that alcohol provides a palliative for his worldly concerns. “I’mma wash my problems away,” Chamillionaire raps. “Tonight I need a drank.” R&B Lothario Valentino, meanwhile, announces that he doesn’t usually drink but admits he’s “gone” -- read: wasted -- from drinking a mixture of tequila and rose wine.

Note: Sterling P. on the N. Y. Road Trip to Akron 1937

According to Lois W’s Diary, seven members of New York A.A. drove to Akron in October 1937 – Bill and Lois W., Bill and Kathleen R., Sterling and Ruth P., and Fitz M (picked up, according to Lois, “near Pittsburgh”). Bill W. was, of course, the (co-)founder of A.A., Bill R. was the first Chairman of the Board, and Fitz M. one of the founders of A.A. in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Maryland, D.C., and perhaps Virginia.

Sterling P., who drove with Bill and Lois W. and Bill and Kathleen R. to Akron in the early days of A.A. – the first Akron “road trip” from New York A.A. – has largely escaped attention. Work by historians of A.A. Bill S. and John B. has come up with the following:

From a letter that Paul S[-----] sent to Bill & Lois four days before they left for the October 1937 trip to Akron: “Dr. S[----] just told me that we are to expect a visit from you over the week-end, and that two other couples, the P[-----]s and the R[-----]s, are coming with you.”

Lois’ diary then notes Sterling (P[-----]) as being their driver coming back home again:

Saturday, October 9: Left N.Y. about noon with the R[-----]s for Akron in their car.

Sunday, October 10: The four of us spent the night in Chambersburg, then picked up Fitz near Pittsburgh and drove on to Akron arriving about 5 P.M. Went to dinner with a large crowd at [Paul] S[-----]’s. Stayed with S[----]s [Dr Bob and Anne].

Saturday, October 16: Left Akron at 4:30 P.M. and drove home all night with Sterling P[-----].
Sunday, October 17: From Akron. Arrived in Newark at 5:30 A.M. and had breakfast at Childs and then took tube [Hudson & Manhattan, later PATH] home and went to bed.

There is an earlier letter in the Stepping Stones Archive
Tab: WGW/LBW 102.7 – Correspondence – General – Friends/Associates (1937)
Front Flap: WGW Box 25 F 29
No Number (August 10, 1937)
Original Handwritten Letter from Sterling to Bill [W-----] (1 page)
[Printed Letterhead:] Henry G. P[-----] Inc. / Eleven Hill Street / Newark, New Jersey

August 10th 1937

Dear Bill.

Words cannot express my appreciation for the financial aid that you gave me last week. I am enclosing a properly signed note as a matter of record and will consider it one of my first obligations when Honor Dealers become financially successful.

I'm sure Bill that your success as well as mine will be measured not in dollars, but rather in giving unselfishly and being truly helpful to others. Thanks and thanks again for giving me a little lift off the hook.

Sincerely,
Sterling

[NOTE: there is no "properly signed note" preserved in this correspondence file.]

Sterling Carl P[-----] (b Akron 9 March 1900 d NY Oct 1963) was a tire salesman in Ridgewood NJ in 1930. He had attended the University of Akron in 1917-18 and possibly was at college in Ohio in 1926, when he is thanked for his help in preparing the yearbook NIHON. His wife's name was Ruth and he had children, including a son Sterling Carl P[-----] Jr. (b. 1924). He is listed sometimes as Sterling C., sometimes as C. Sterling, and in the Social Security Death Index as Carl. The 1930 Census (residence: Ridgewood, business: tire salesman) gives Ohio as place of birth. The 1920 Census shows him living in Akron. His WW1 draft card (showing him as a student at Akron U) gives his exact birth date and his name as Sterling Carl P[-----]. The Social Security Death Index shows Carl P[-----] b. on the right date in Akron, d. NYC 1963. The Yearbook reference comes from a Yearbook section on ancestry.com.

Sterling P[-----] had three brothers, Joseph J. (b. July 1890 d. January 4 1941), Lloyd G. W. (b. Feb 22 1895 d. August 3 1969), Arthur Ray (b. Mar 7 1898), in 1930 a golf instructor in Akron, and two sisters, Anna (b. April 1885) and Helen (b. July 1892), living at home with their parents in Akron in 1910. Anna was a teacher -- Helen may have been. In 1910 Sterling's father, Joseph J. (b. April 1858, possibly d. Hamilton County OH 1919), was a tire maker. His mother, Mary, was born in September 1858 (date of death probably after 1944). In any case, Sterling had brothers and possibly his mother and one or both sisters living in Akron in 1937. The early list of Akron A.A.s (available on the Hindsfoot website) does not include anyone named Parker.

Note: More on John Henry Fitzhugh M

John Henry Fitzhugh M. has been a frequent subject of our notes. This note is based largely on the first part of an extended interview/conversation between Bill W. and “Arabella” M., who was Ruth J., Fitz’s second wife and widow, conducted in 1954. It begins with material on “Arabella” and her first husband. She wrote (from Washington) to the Alcoholic Foundation about her husband, Norman, in 1939-40, and was told to get in touch with Fitz M., who was then working from his sister’s apartment in Washington. Here’s how the Washington Intergroup publication (*The Washington Group 1936-1941*) has it (Chapter 14, “Post Script: Fitz After 1940”): “When Fitz met Ruth J., she was the wife of an alcoholic named Norman. In the fall of 1939 she had read the *Liberty Magazine* article about Alcoholics Anonymous and realized that perhaps the fellowship could help her husband. In response to a letter she wrote to the Alcoholic Foundation, Ruth Hock told her that Fitz M. would be in Washington in the near future and that he could be contacted at his sister Agnes' apartment. When Ruth met him, Fitz had ‘more or less a temporary home at a boarding house near Florida and Connecticut Avenues. He was always welcome, they tucked him in whenever he happened to be in town’ [quotation from the tape of the Bill W./“Arabella” interview/conversation].”

“Arabella” (actual given name “Ruth”) was born April 21, 1898, in Vermont (though the SSDI gives 1878), and had previously been married to Norman J[----], born in Pennsylvania August 6, 1895 (died Los Angeles CA March 9, 1954, buried in Los Angeles National Cemetery). They had a daughter, Isabella, named after his mother. Ruth (“Arabella”) was employed by the Department of Agriculture, Norman by the Consular Service of the Department of State. His father died when he was young, and his mother, Isabella, married a man named Nathan Byron, with whom she and her daughter Gertrude (17) and son Norman (15) were living in Pittsburgh in 1910. He was a Private, Sergeant, and Sergeant-Major, then Sergeant again, then Private again in the Marine Corps 1916-21, and Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps 1930-35. The divorce of Norman T. J[----] and Ruth Munro J[----] was granted in Reno NV January 28, 1943.

Ruth was born in Vermont, daughter of Donald and Elvira Munro, with sister Esther (15 in 1910) and brothers Marcus (14) and Charles (9). So far as I know, the name “Arabella” was fanciful, and I suspect a search for its origins would be a bit beside the point. Her social security card, however, registered her as Arabella M[---]. She died in Westchester County NY in early 1972.

In the interview/conversation, “Arabella” describes Fitz’s rootlessness, his frequent trips wherever inspiration took him, his fervent faith in the A.A. process (especially in prayer and meditation), his lack of interest in holding any job (except for his year teaching in the lower school at Landon School), his restlessness, up and down and shifting positions on chair or couch, trying to get his long legs comfortable, up and down the east coast from fledgling A.A. group to fledgling A.A. group, his estrangement from his wife Libby, her divorcing him and keeping the children from him (except “Hugh” – young Fitzhugh, who was then 18 – and eventually the older daughter, when she was 18: the younger daughter [1931-1976] he never saw after she was five – and I have no evidence the older children, including Hugh, saw him after the divorce). The text here is from *The Washington Group: Foundations 1936-41*, quoting the interview/conversation:

“Well, he'd be invited some place and then he'd stay a day or two. If the situation became a little difficult, any wrangling or fussing among the people he was with, he'd say, 'Well, God doesn't want me in this irritating situation.' So he would just take off, he'd grab his hat, bag and off he went. He did that practically all up and down the coast, and he never seemed to get a job, every time he thought he had one, right in the palm of his hand, somehow it would slip through his fingers and I believe that God had a lot to do with that. Because Fitz – it brought him into all manner of homes, the poor and the wealthy and where he was one of the family because he had no funds of his own. As I remember, all he had was one little worn out bag that he used to carry an extra shirt in and a couple of pairs of no funds of his own and in that way he really spread the A.A. gospel and plus, the plus was really the spiritual.”

“Arabella” describes – and Bill chimes in to agree – Fitz’s bouts of depression, his wonderful smile (so rarely seen), his getting up in the middle of talking to his friends and rushing off, saying he felt he was needed elsewhere, his eventually successful efforts to get into the service (winding up in Biloxi MS) and then leaving the service, ill, being diagnosed with cancer (a letter on that is printed below), then marrying “Arabella” after her divorce from Norman, when the prognosis of death from cancer was already known.

Along the way, back in 1939, Norman J., who never got sober himself, had brought Bill A., one of the pivotal figures in early Virginia A.A., into the fold. As *The Washington Group: Foundations 1936-41* puts it, quoting the interview/conversation: “Then, my husband, Norman, got interested in A.A. and called Bill A., the big lumberman, and rather a political figure in Arlington County. . . . Bill A. invited him to come and said he was coming by for him, which he did, but N.T. [Norman] had never shown up – he had gone off on a binge in the meantime that afternoon... So Bill went on to the meeting and Steve M.s' wife called and told me about the medicine to give – to put N.T. out of the picture temporarily, and she came out in the car and took me to the meeting... “

Among the more interesting pieces of information “Arabella” contributes are (1) the information that Steve M[-----] was the first to get and stay sober in D.C. (in 1939), and (2) a discussion of George Loenholm S. (1910-1961), son of General George Veazey S. (1880-1946), Chief of Army Intelligence in WW2. George Loenholm S. she calls “Georgie Porgie” and describes him as remaining active (though not always sober) in Washington A.A. even after the War. It may be of interest that George Loenholm S. was b. March 29 1910 and may thus have been the youngest member of A.A. in 1940. He d. November 18 1961 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, where he is described as CAPT 1ST AAF BU BOLLING FLD WASH DC AC USA CORPS OF ENGRS. I have not traced Steve M. further.

Here’s a letter (the last) from Fitz to his lifelong friend Churchill (“Deacon”) Murray (also from *The Washington Group: Foundations 1936-41* “Post Script”), quoted not because it is relevant to Fitz’s work in A.A. *per se*, but because, with “Arabella”’s description of his abrupt mood shifts and restless activity, it helps provide a true picture of the man Bill W. called (in the interview/conversation) one of the founders of A.A. and Bill’s own best friend in A.A. The letter is entirely consistent with the picture of Fitz given by “Arabella” in the tape.

Hines Veterans Hospital,
Hines, Ill,
April 20th [1943], 9AM

Dear Deacon:

'T is snowing hard and has been doing so all night – Strange to spend a winter among flowers and birds and then see so many snow storms in April. Your letter of April 6th took quite a trip, first to Biloxi, then forwarded to Akron, then to Washington, DC and finally to me. So now I'm sending a few lines to tell you a little about myself tho' I believe Arabella has had something to say on the subject of my being here.

I developed rear-end trouble while in the Army about November, it got worse – was to have been operated on at station hospital but an epidemic of something prevented. Was to have gone back to hospital but got a discharge to go into an essential war industry after having been refused it. In the meantime Arabella came on from California and we got married.

I might have stayed in army and demanded medical attention, but I was not impressed with the kind I might get. A Keesler Field. Application to Veterans Bureau failed to get me in Vets Hospital at Biloxi so after Arabella got over flu we lit out for Akron, Ohio, where a good A.A. friend of mine is a renal doctor. I applied again for admittance to Vets hospital near Cleveland, but couldn't get in even tho' the President had signed a bill making Veterans hospital facilities available for the disabled of World War II

My doctor friend was dubious about my working, but I got a job with Goodyear Aircraft and survived 12 hours a day (including to and from work) for 10 days – then went to a private hospital where the doctor, Bob S[----], cut into me and discovered cancer. – That created a new situation with Arabella really out on a limb. Fortunately, she had worked at the Veterans Administration and knew General Hines, the head of it. She phoned him and asked him to get me in Walter Reed. He said yes, then phoned her back that I should come here as it's supposed to be one of the greatest cancer hospitals in the country (other troubles also).

As I lost 31 pounds while in the Army, they were trying to fatten me up and get me built up. I believe they intend to operate on me next week. I am very thankful to have gotten in here, believe me, as it answers several problems, especially concerning Arabella. I am quite comfortable now, tho' my disintegrating chassis was giving me hell. I am enjoying relaxing and reading and rest and can say that I am unconcerned and at peace within.

The tough experiences are simply part of a great adventure and part of a great education. Why separate in our minds the continuity of the life of the soul just because the body in which it is housed for awhile becomes no longer fitting for it? If we could see everything ahead there would be no adventure. Maybe they will patch my chassis up, maybe not. What of it? I am not the master of my destiny, but there is One who is and He loves each one of us, tho' oft-times we would doubt that because we cannot see the whole, the finished plan of the great Builder. Would people feel a need for God were there not trials and tribulations?

These things needs must be, for man has been his own God with his own aims and purposes and he cannot find the realities of eternal life until he seeks them – To do that he must cast out beliefs he has held to and with the mind of a child accept without questioning and with trust the circumstances whatever they appear to be.

I shall close – wish I could get hold of that gill net with you and Bro.

Love to all, as always,
Fitz

PS. Agnes only one who knows about this cancer.

Material from the *A.A. Grapevine* 1944-45

This material, from the November 1944, January 1945, and February 1945 issues of the *A.A. Grapevine*, bears on three questions of interest: (1) the early (1935-1945) spread of A.A., including here the anomaly that A.A. in Vermont, the home state of its co-founders, was established by a visitor from New Jersey; (2) the relationship of Charles J[-----], the author of *The Lost Week-End* to A.A.; and (3) baseball and alcoholism (and here Alcoholics Anonymous). All three items relate to New England.

Joe F. of New Jersey Finds AA in Vermont

From the *A.A. Grapevine*, Vol. 1, No. 6, November 1944, p. 7: “Ruth and Joe F. [East Orange] and Francis M., of the Morristown Group, along with Hal R. of East Orange, lately did some New England A.A. pioneering. As a result of their talks before local organizations in Montpelier and Burlington, Vermont, groups were created in both towns. With continued cooperation of A.A.’ers generally, it is expected that these newly-established groups will soon be thriving. [Hal R., as of December 1944, was Financial Secretary of the new Newark NJ clubhouse.] From the *A.A. Grapevine*, Vol. 1, No. 8, January 1945, p. 4 [headlined “Granite Vermont opens its Heart to A.A.” and signed by “Monty” and Ted K]:

“Curious things happen here. For instance, Bill and Doc were born here and perhaps they felt there was no need for A.A. in this quiet, kindly, historic state. But they have not been here for some time and things have changed since then.

“The beginning of A.A. in Vermont is credited wholly to Joe. About a minute after he deposited his bags on arrival, he began to look over the “larger” cities such as Burlington (23,000) and Montpelier (7,500). He found plenty to do. Joe had an A.A. group going in each of these cities in no time.

“In Burlington the group consists of a printer, an electrician, an insurance broker, and a sound engineer, and a doctor is a good prospect for their next meeting. Montpelier has a few more members; there is Jim B., who owns an excellent dry-cleaning business; yours truly with varied interests – office machines, a taxi business, and an ice-cream and dairy store in town; George B., owner of a wholesale candy business (won a grand betting on F.D.R.); Ted K., writer,

farmer, and breeder of Aberdeen Angus cattle; Wayne D., right now selling Christmas trees and farming -- treasurer; Merrill P., famer; Ralph H., chef of the hospitable and attractive Montpelier Tavern. We also have Elbert C., wholesale and retail pork products (ten years dry this month), our real standby in a pinch, and Wayne B., owner of large lumbering interests in Stowe, Vermont, twenty miles away. Wayne has not missed a meeting since the group was started in October. Two other out-of-town members are Dick L., of Waterbury, which is twelve miles away, and Dick C., a merchant of Newbury, thirty-eight miles away. Our one honorary member, Bill F. (three years dry), is an associate of Joe's and is now in New York City.

"The plan, for now, is to keep the group small and to meet at the home of yours truly. In the spring we hope to come out with open meetings and take on all comers. With this in view we just will not allow *any* slips. Each member knows and understands the plan, having actually voted on it at a regular meeting. This means, of course, they just can't slip, which would be a catastrophe for Vermont. After all, it's Bill's and Bob's state and it is the most recent to come into A.A.

"We do not stop here, however, as the real backfield, Jim B., Wayne D., George B., Ted K., and the secretary, are at it daily. We have spoiled lots of drinks in Montpelier, we know, and even some non-admitting alcoholics are seen in drug stores and coffee shops more than in the past.

"As you all know, Joe is a tireless worker for A.A., and on a recent trip to Montpelier we made many contacts. One of the most pleasant was lunch with our Governor-Elect, a non-A.A. He had little knowledge of our program and Joe covered it fairly. He has promised to come to one of our meetings some Monday night. He was informed that no funds are now available for the care and treatment of alcoholics in any Vermont institution. In fact, not even one bed is available. By way of contrast, Joe told what New Jersey is now doing in this respect.

"We of the Montpelier group feel fortunate in having such an outstanding sponsor and such fine friends from New Jersey.

"By combining A.A. with his regular business trips about the state, our Secretary hopes to start many A.A. groups in Vermont. We boast that we will have at least six groups going before April.

"Much credit must be given to the wives in our group. Each week two volunteer on the eats and we are yet to be disappointed with any of the sandwiches, pumpkin pie, ice cream, cake, maple syrup and raised doughnuts, cheese and coffee, coffee, coffee.

"We are also pleased that two Ration Boards have granted gas for our work, so Vermont is in high spirits as this is written."

Charles J[-----] Speaks at Hartford A.A.

From the *A.A. Grapevine*, Vol. 1, No. 8, January 1945, p. 3, signed by *Marion May R., Hartford, Connecticut*): "When Charles J[-----], author of A.A.'s favorite best-seller, *The Lost Week-End*, consented to speak at the Hartford group's November [1944] meeting, he said his topic was 'Why I Wrote *The Lost Week-End*.'

"He began by saying he was not professionally a public speaker and he was not and never had been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. The occasion was, in fact, his first contact with the group at all.

"J[-----] wrote *The Lost Week-End*, he said, 'because I think the alcoholic problem is one of the most serious problems in American life, because gifted people are often its victims, and because the alcoholic has been too frequently looked upon as a comic figure.' There was a sore need, he pointed out, for such a character study as that of Don Birnam. Whereas alcoholics have often appeared as characters in books, never before, to J[-----]'s knowledge, had one been the principal figure. The public needed to be shown the true tragic nature of the alcoholic.

"The first publisher to whom the book was offered thought it would not sell because of the public's interest in the war.. 'Nobody cares about the individual,' says the rejection letter. The book was accepted by the second publisher, Farrar and Rinehart; and it has gone into six printings in less than a year. It is also currently being published in Swedish, Spanish, Portuguese; and in England and South Africa. Apparently the problem is almost as much interested in alcoholism as in the problems of the war-torn world.

"*The Lost Week-End* has been criticized because Dan Birnam was left no better off in the end than he was in the beginning. Many readers thought the author should have solved the problem, or at least hinted at some change in the better for Don. J[-----] answered this charge by saying that no 'reform' worthy of the name would be possible in five days, which is the length of time covered in the book, and that, moreover, it is not up to a novelist to solve psychiatric problems, but merely to present such problems – to 'state the case,' so to speak. He said that he would be a 'reformer' if he had expanded the book to a year's time and pointed out the solution. The book would then have been a 'tract' and not the pure novel or character study it was intended to be. Moreover, J[-----] added, the hopeless note on which the book was concluded tends to make the reader concerned about the problems of alcoholism.

"A nationally known psychiatrist has declared on the radio that Don Birnam was a true 'character,' and that he would be known in real life as a 'still drinker,' or hopeless addict, as the solitary drinker is often considered, whose next step would have to be death. The author, however, does not agree that death is the sole solution. He thinks Birnam can recover. Not by the help of any doctor, because medical men do not understand how the alcoholic feels inside; but with the help of an exceptionally intuitive man, or another alcoholic, who can understand him because of a similar background or experience.

"Though he is at present just completing a new novel called *The Fall of Valor*, which is not a sequel and has nothing to do with the earlier book, J[-----] said there would be another story about Don Birnam about a year and a half from now, in which Don finds his way out of his predicament – perhaps through A.A., perhaps by other means. He added that it would do no good for Don Birnam to give up drink for anyone but himself alone. If he gave it up for a relative or friend, the 'reform' would not work.

"Alcoholics Anonymous would be good for Don Birnam, J[-----] thought, as A.A. gives the solitary drinker a social outlet. It would give Don friends who did not consider addiction a stigma. Don hid from the people he knew because he was remorseful over his behavior and he knew others thought ill of him. He would not have to feel this way among A.A. members, who would be eager to give him true fellowship, help him face the fact that he could not drink, and make him understand that there was no shame connected with his past addiction.

"Alcoholism, J[-----] went on to say, should not be whispered about as tuberculosis once was. The problem can be dealt with better when it is considered by the public not as something 'unmentionable,' but as an unfortunate illness such as tuberculosis has come to be considered.

"J[-----] said he was indebted to A.A. for one of the novel's most telling points. He referred to the phrase he used in the book which says that, for the alcoholic, 'one drink is too many and a hundred not enough.'

"Most A.A.s wonder, after reading the book, whether J[-----] is an alcoholic. The author's answer to that question was diplomatic. He said he used to drink 'like most everybody else' but gave it up when it interfered with his work. Though the actual events of the story are invented, he explained his remarkably understanding portrayal of Don Birnam by saying 'I have a good memory.' Listeners drew their own conclusions.

"J[-----] had a few words of advice for A.A., some of it based upon his own experience. "how can you endure a cocktail party and meet so many people without putting yourself at ease with a few drinks?" is a question often asked of him. He said that he handles such situations by rationalizing with himself. He believes that everybody, without exception, is scared of new people, no matter how little they may show their self-consciousness; and he recalls the fact that heavy drinking only makes one suffer more in the end. He prefers to go through a social evening with a clear head, because now he wants to get the most out of life by being fully aware.

"J[-----] named ridicule as another problem faced by the ex-addict, and admitted that he had smiled at the notion of Alcoholics Anonymous when he first heard of it. The non-drinking alcoholic will be offered drinks and kidded for not accepting them, and practical jokers will try to give him soft drinks with liquor in them, he warned. He went on to say that the victim of this sort of treatment must learn to 'take it.'

"It is J[-----]'s opinion that while normal people can in time become alcoholics merely by overdoing their drinking, most alcoholics, like Don Birnam, suffer some underlying neurosis that is primarily responsible for their addiction. He believes that only after the addiction itself is arrested can the basic difficulty be found and possibly corrected.

"J[-----] wanted it definitely understood that he is not against drinking except when the indulgence of an individual harms someone else or the drinker himself. If remorse is present, however, the drinker obviously is ashamed of his behavior and should be helped, but only if he wants help.

"Just a word about Charlie J[-----], the man. I expected to meet someone a little on the aloof side – someone above the usual level, where of course J[-----] has a right to be. But Charlie won't let you look up to him. When he's talking to you or listening to you he makes you feel that you matter to him. Friendly, modest, sincere, unspoiled – that's Charlie J[-----].

Notes: John Chipman (Chip) Farrar (1896-1974), the presiding genius of Farrar and Rinehart, was a college friend and classmate of H. Godfrey H. (1897-1959), later Lt-Col USA (buried at Arlington), whose signature appears in the first copy sold of the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous, and of Charlie B. (1898-1961) one of the founders of Philadelphia A.A.. All three were taught and "mentored" by William Lyon Phelps (1865-1943), who popularized the phrase "One day at a time" before there was an A.A. Whether this played a part in Chip Farrar's accepting *The Lost Weekend* for publication I cannot say, but the connection is interesting. Also, Chip Farrar was a friend of Steve Benét (1898-1943) and his brother William (1886-1950), who were friends of the poet Leonard Bacon (1887-1953), one of those who guided (his cousin) Rowland H. (1881-1945) to Dr. Jung. It may be of interest that Charles J[-----] did the script for the radio play of Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster" (January 1944, after Benét's death). (I have referred to him as Charles J[-----], though his full name is given in the original, because he seems later on to have been involved in A.A. A friend of mine and member of this listserv has

written a book on the author of *The Lost Weekend* that did not meet the particular publishers specifications of length, but ought to be published. Charles J. was born in 1903 and died in 1968.)

Nate A. (Boston Pitcher) Gets Sober in Connecticut

From the *A.A. Grapevine*, Vol. 1, No. 8, January 1945, p. 7: “The husky [Boston] Braves pitcher, Nate A[-----], while at training camp last spring [1944], went on a terrific tear that involved hidden bottles, nerve pills, and frantic long-distance telephone calls. The whole of it ended in columns of bad publicity. He was rescued by the Boston A.A.’s, and though there was little confidence that the good-natured popular Nate would ever fully recover from his ordeal, he did. With a sixth-place team, Nate won 16, lost 15 games. He was the best pitcher on the club. An enthusiastic member of the Boston A.A. group, he spoke often at meetings. The publicity given his dive overboard and subsequent rescue brought into the group one hundred and fifty new men during the summer. Retaining his delightful sense of humor, Nate said just before returning to his home in North Carolina, “But Ah told ‘em they needn’t expect me to make an example out of myself every spring.”

From the *A.A. Grapevine*, Vol. 1, No. 9, February 1945, p. 3 [Letter from Van M., East Hartford CT]: “You have mentioned Nate A.’s rescue as being effected by the Boston group, so as long as you have made this a matter of record, you should have the correct details.

“Dr. Wrang, a stockholder and physician for the Boston Braves, telephoned a member of the Hartford A.A. about 12:30 a.m. one night to ask if A.A. could help Nate. The next day, Nate was put in jail at Wallingford [Connecticut, the location of the Braves’ Spring training camp in 1943-44] as a protective custody measure. That day, Jack D. and Jack P. arrived in Wallingford as the result of a sports column in the Boston papers that morning describing Nate’s saturated arrival for spring training.

“These two fine A.A.s deserve great praise for coming all the way from Boston to help Nate. Unfortunately, they were not familiar with the section of Connecticut around Wallingford and left the jail to ponder ways and means of getting Nate released.

“At this point, a member of the Hartford A.A. arrived, transferred Nate to a comfortable sanatorium, several days later ‘lifted’ him by airplane from T’s Hospital in New York, returned him to Hartford and maintained him for several days in his home, prescribing much exercise, good food, B complex, much milk, and a round of golf. This resulted in Nate being welcomed back to training camp in such good condition that the following morning he was able to participate in setting-up exercises and run several laps around the track, topping off his first day by pitching the equivalent of about three innings.

“In view of these facts, and were you to ask either Bob Quinn, President, or Bob Coleman, Manager of the Boston Braves, I am sure they would agree that the Hartford group should deserve credit for an assist in this rescue.”

Note: Nate A. (1913-1991) was one of the pitchers chosen for the 1944 All Star Game, though he didn’t pitch. His lifetime record (1939-1946) was 41-54 (E.R.A. 3.46). Of interest is that he was a member (briefly) of the Cleveland Indians in 1940-41 when the catcher was Rollie H., the first major leaguer in A.A., so he had previous exposure (at one remove, if no closer) to A.A. As noted parenthetically in the text, the Boston Braves had their 1943-44 training camp at

Wallingford CT. Dr. William Emil Wrang Sr. (1895-1965), of Hartford and Middletown CT, was part of the syndicate headed by Bob Quinn that bought the Braves in 1941 (of which the golfer Francis Ouimet was a member and VP of the Braves): he sold all but a very small amount of his minority interest to the new Perini syndicate in 1944, and the remainder (I think) in 1946. He is a member of the Middletown Sports Hall of Fame. The following anecdote comes, improbably, from the war-time pages of *Yank: the Army Weekly* (News from the Home Front): “Dr. William Wrang, who had arranged a golf exhibition match at the Edgewood Country Club in Middletown featuring Gene Sarazen, was called away to perform an appendectomy; he returned before the end of the match with the appendix in a vial.”

History and Historiography of A.A. (Part III) (Continued from Vol. 4, no. 3)

The ninth historiographical question is whether the history of A.A. is in some sense written only by the “winners” (thus the official version) or the “losers” (thus attacking the official version)? (This is obviously connected with the advocacy question, the inside/outside question, and the bottom up/top down question – and has a place in the local/regional/national question.) The example of official history quoted earlier takes it more or less as given that the creation of the New York-based Conference and the G.S.O. were good things, and the adoption of Twelve Traditions (1950) and the Twelve Concepts (1962) likewise good and valuable things. Most A.A.s probably agree (at least on the Conference, the G.S.O., and the Traditions), if they consider the matter at all. Part of the *gravamen* of *How It Worked* is that none of these things was particularly a good idea. But this does not mean that only those who take sides on this matter will write about it (or any other dispute where current conditions suggest winners and losers). In fact, it is possible to study all four of these – the Conference structure, G.S.O., the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts – and their history, without taking sides. In fact, the study can almost certainly achieve more if it does not take sides. The change in Conference structure heralded by Dick C.’s “Chit-Chat” campaign, the general restriction of G.S.O. to formula responses after Bill W.’s withdrawal from active leadership, the heritage and strength and weakness of a traditionary mode of order, and the fact that the Twelve Concepts are Bill W.’s application of Toqueville to problems revealed in applying the Twelve Traditions – these are not matters likely to be discussed in advocacy history by either winners or losers.

The (more general) tenth historiographical question is, What can reasonably be said about existing attempts to write the history of A.A., or parts of it? Here we can look at, first and foremost, Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* (1979, new ed. 1991), as noted earlier, along with the collection of Ernie’s essays (many of them historical) in *The Collected Ernie Kurtz*, which came out in 1999 from The Bishop of Books (in Wheeling, West Virginia). and at Barry Leach and John L. Norris, “Factors in the Development of Alcoholics Anonymous” in *The Biology of Alcoholism*, ed. H Begleiter, Vol. 5 (1977), pp. 441-553. Jack Norris was a Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustee of A.A. for many years, Barry Leach a well-known psychologist specializing in alcoholism and drug addiction: this is the most balanced of the “inside” accounts of A.A. Ernie Kurtz has preserved (as he says) his ambiguity rather than his anonymity, so that he can be a link between the historical profession and A.A. (*Not-God* was an outgrowth of his 1976 Harvard Ph.D. dissertation in History), but his original training was to be a (Roman) Catholic priest, and his interest in A.A. is both philosophical and historical.

There is an unauthorized but useful history of the years 1957-1985 in circulation (in what looks like a photographic copy of a typeset but unpublished original, apparently by Bob P.), a number of local histories and documents available on the Internet (some of the documents without permission), perhaps a smaller number of local histories available in print, the local history Hindsfoot material, especially (as noted) the second edition, *The Factory Owner & the Convict* and *The St. Louis Gambler & the Railroad Man* (2005). There is also Wally P., *But, For the Grace of God ... How Intergroups & Central Offices Carried the Message of Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1940s* (1995), anecdotal but still useful in understanding the spread of A.A.

Hazelden has published a short biography of Ebby T. who “brought the message” to Bill W., as well as Sally Brown’s biography of Marty Mann, the founder of the National Council on Alcoholism, and a biography of Dr. Silkworth (*The Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks*) – among others. But here we may consider the desiderata set out by the 1997 proposal to the Trustees (not because we agree with everything in that proposal – indeed, our periodization is different – but because it sets out a program of interest to us). The following is quoted from that proposal. “Should there be a history of AA? Yes, if only to study AA's past as a guide to its future. First we should find out whether 1935 was a golden moment (or 1935-40 a golden time) for the founding of AA. Why did it come then, not before? What was there about this moment that made AA possible, apparently for the first time? We should consider the invention of the word *alcoholic* in 1891, the idea of Humility and the nineteenth/twentieth-century history of theology and religious experience, the First Century Christian Fellowship (Oxford Group), use of confession and conversation as education in nineteenth-century America (Mark Hopkins on one end of the log and a student on the other), the Age of Slogans.

“Second, if it was golden, we should try to find out whether the conditions and circumstances that made this the golden moment or golden time continued through the years – or, if they have changed, how they have changed, and what are the implications of the change for AA. Is the present year enough like the years 1935-1940, or 1940-1955, for the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to work as they have worked, or the Service Structure to work as intended? Have the intervening years been enough alike? In other words, this would be an exercise in what is called Applied History – the application of the techniques of historical analysis to determine the comparability of the present with the past, in order to answer a question of practical importance – in this case of very great practical importance. AA has recognized the need for a history of AA, but has not been able to find an acceptable way of getting that history written. In the existing AA literature, the years after 1950 are covered sketchily at best. Indeed, after 1955 there is almost no coverage except of Bill W. himself – barring material in the non-AA source *Not God*. And even *Not God* only goes to 1987 – and that only in an Appendix briefly covering the years 1972-1987. What is needed is at least a full history of AA from 1940 to the present year. This full history should be written with regard for the *dictum* from social-systems analysis that social systems must grow or die, and the leveling-off of A.A. membership in the United States may thus be a bad sign for the future. We need to look to A.A.’s history to see how the fellowship got where it is. It is important that this be a formal history of AA, using the historian's techniques, and written by an historian who can write readable formal history.

“It is therefore not feasible that it be a simple continuation of *AA Comes of Age*, an essentially personal document. Indeed, the time from the Jack Alexander article (early 1941) to the St. Louis Convention needs more than the anecdotal coverage provided in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. One historiographic problem unique to A.A. should be noted here. All human history is personal history, and although members of A.A. are constantly reminded to

place principles before personalities, it remains true that A.A.'s history is both personal and institutional. How anonymous that personal history must be is up to A.A., but it must be included. In fact, personal histories are crucial in determining whether A.A. now is essentially the same fellowship in which the Twelve Steps were working in 1941 and the Twelve Traditions in 1951. The combined personal/institutional history of AA 1940-2000 can be conveniently divided into 15-year segments, roughly as follows: 1940-1955: Bill W., Dr. Bob, and the Coming of Age: From Before the Jack Alexander Article to the St. Louis Convention; 1955-1970: Building the Structure: From St. Louis to Miami and the Last Appearance of Bill W.; 1970-1985: A.A. Faces a New Age and a Generation Gap: After the Social Revolution of the 1960s; 1985-2000: Struggle and Structure Here, Coming of Age Abroad: AA in a Changing World."

This being said, the eleventh historiographical question is, do we (in all this or elsewhere) have a usable model or paradigm for writing A.A. history? The study *From Joyous Garde to Area 59*, as we have noted, suggests a model for historical research on Alcoholics Anonymous as a continuing company or society. In fact, it suggests the Henry Teune-Zdravko Mlinar model in *The Developmental Logic of Social Systems* (Sage 1979); considering A.A. as a social (developmental) system/subsystem, and thus considering local or regional A.A. as a further hiving off of system properties into subordinate subsystems ("sub-subsystems") Besides establishing the necessity for A.A. to grow and change or else die, this paradigm has some implications for studying the development of "spontaneous order" in the history and historiography of A.A., this involving at least (1) distinctions between and among conventional order (mechanical or neo-mechanical systems), natural order (biological/ ecological systems), and social order (social/developmental systems, ordered by human action but not specific human intention); (2) the question of the spontaneous "survival of the fittest" (but not always, which goes with the problem of well-being as accident), and (3) problems of freedom and co-ordination in spontaneous order without market mechanisms. (This is to be set out in Part VI of *From Joyous Garde to Area 59*.) There's been a good deal of study of developmental systems as well as of spontaneous order (and also of the "invention of tradition"), so that the models or paradigms formed in that study can bring understanding to ours. But this is not the only model-making to be involved here.

The principal point to be made here (taken from *This Strange Illness: Alcoholism and Bill W.* [2004], p. 17) is that social systems, being developmental systems, must change (by creating new internal diversity in response to new exogenously created diversity), and that the guidelines for orderly change are in the "Twelve Traditions" Bill W. created between 1946 and 1952 – which brings us to the area of the "Invention of Tradition" (a field generally connected with the study of literature, particularly of the Celtic Revival of the Nineteenth Century) and then (in a search for non-self-ordering "governance") to the "Theory of Committees" (a field generally connected with political and decision sciences). These too are part of our model-building.

Societies, as J. G. A. Pocock has taught us (*Politics, Language, and Time*, 1989), exist in time and conserve images of themselves as continuously so existing. An essential feature of society is tradition – meaning, the handing on of formed ways of acting. Tradition in this sense is immemorial, prescriptive, and presumptive. What stands outside tradition is charismatic, whether postulating timeless existence or sacred origin (which includes creative origin). The criticism – but thus the affirmation – of tradition is history. All classical (as opposed to romantic) social systems are of this traditionalist sort. But because societies necessarily – in order to be societies – conserve images of themselves as existing (and acting in a certain way)

nemo meminisse contradicente, there is necessary conservatism in the very idea of a society. They appeal to tradition and are thus traditional (or traditionaly). They conserve tradition and are thus conservative, even if the tradition they conserve is not a conservative tradition – as in Romanticism, and (perhaps) Alcoholics Anonymous. Certainly one of the founders of Al-Anon, Dr. Ruth Fox (Coleman) was far from being a Conservative – indeed, like her husband and her sister and her sister’s second husband, she was a Socialist. (Her sister’s first husband was perhaps a little further to the left.)

Traditions should provide “responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition” (Eric Hobsbawm in *The Invention of Tradition*, 1981). The key words may be *old* and *past*, though certainly there is quasi-obligatory repetition of the Twelve Traditions at many A.A. meetings. We can look at these Traditions as a kind of social engineering for a *koinonia* ordered (appropriately) through a committee structure. Bill W.’s emphasis on committee consensus rather than majority vote may be seen as a way of avoiding the pitfalls of intransitivity of social choice. The emphasis on the primary purpose or singleness of purpose may be seen as a way of ensuring single-peaked preferences so as to permit Condorcet solutions and avoid the necessity for mechanistic De Borda solutions or the log-rolling of Dodgson solutions. But in the end, the social engineering was based on a spiritual insight, and with all the safeguards of the Twelve Traditions, it looks to us as though A.A. will function well as a *koinonia* (community) in the social-systems sense pretty well to the degree it functions well as a *koinonia* (fellowship) in the spiritual-assembly sense.

And finally, the twelfth historiographical question, overarching our whole set of questions, is this: if history is biography (and much of it is), how can we write the history of those who must remain anonymous? This question was noted in the 1997 Proposal quoted above. (The model or paradigm can help, but it will not solve the problem – and this is also related to the question of A.A. history by A.A.s or by non-A.A.s). As we have gone along, talking about Fitz M. and Johnny L. and Mike E., and Mac H., and Yev G., and even Bill W. and Dr. Bob S., and it begins to be borne in on us (or at least on me) that these are abstractions. In fact, Matt Raphael has considered this point – as a matter of individual biography – in his *Bill W. and Mr. Wilson* (University of Massachusetts Press 2000). Which was the real person – Bill W. or William G. Wilson? Or both? And who could tell? And how was Mr. Wilson acting a different part when he was Bill W. And was it like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*? When Jack Alexander wrote his article for the Saturday Evening Post in 1941, he used pseudonyms. It is more certainly satisfying to talk about Sarah Martin than Marty M., or (as in articles in CA&SQ) of Aaron Burr Baldrige than of Aaron Burr B., of the Baldrige family rather than the B. family in the rolling land of Western Kentucky in the days of the Purchase, or of James Payne Lawrence than of J. P. (Johnny) L. (Obviously these are pseudonyms though in some way based on the original names.)

The Web-group AAHistoryLovers allows (though certainly does not require) the use of full names for those members who are dead. I have noted that many of those members who are identifiable from their email “names” as AAs (such as Merton M, for example) routinely refer to members alive or dead by first name and last initial, and of course that is the policy enjoined on those who carry out research not only at the G.S.O. Archives in New York, but (for example) at the Kirk and other Alcohol & Addiction Studies Collections at Brown. A local history of A.A. in North Jersey, available at the Silkworth.net web site, carries the anonymity idea even further by leaving entirely blank the name of a putative first member in Ridgewood, New Jersey, thereby

rendering the reference entirely useless to anyone doing research without access to the original documents. (Even first name and last initial may of course be misleading, as with traveling salesman George L. who started A.A. in Reading PA, traveling salesman George L. who started A.A. in nearby Lebanon PA, and traveling salesman George L. who started A.A. up north in Scranton PA – and they were three different George L.s, even though all three had Philadelphia connections.) On the other hand, a recent inquiry and interchange on the HistoryLovers site used the full name of a well-known member whose story is in the current edition of the “Big Book” but who died while this edition was being published. And of course there is a point – as with tapes of talks at A.A. meetings – where use of identification such as Stevie Ray V. does nothing to preserve anonymity

One difficulty, of course, is that well-known personalities, who are the ones who may most welcome anonymity in their lives, and whose families may welcome it thereafter, are the ones least likely to get it, while the A.As important in local and regional (or even early national) development of the fellowship. whose full names may be highly useful or even necessary in research may be protected because no one ever writes their full names down. (Fitz M.’s nephew and his whole family were unaware that Fitz had gotten sober, let alone been of great importance in the early days of A.A.) A student of local A.A. history may be able to identify most of those locally important (subject to vagaries in spelling), but unless they are then written down, the useful information may not be passed on. Because the AAHistoryLovers can use full names, it is sometimes possible to get them there, but certainly not always, and in research on Eastern Pennsylvania, one of the best ways of establishing contact with the families of early A.A.s has been through the GenForum web site, which of course requires the family names. A.A. publications with last names are marked “Confidential – full names used,” which is meant to restrict use to members of A.A. All the materials developed on Yev G., Johnny L., Fitz M., Aaron Burr B., Oscar V. (to take just five examples), have required full names. Admittedly the full name of Yvelin G. was easy to get – the first name fed into the search engine on the Internet provided it – but one cannot hope for a whole collection of highly unusual first names: it is much more likely that an A.A. group will have “Furniture Frank” or “Frank the Fox” or “Bad Frank” or “Good Frank” than that the members will have names like Yvelin – and probably several of them will be Frank M. As Matt Raphael’s book suggests, there is a certain artificiality to the first-name last-initial *persona* – and artificial biography isn’t, so to speak, a real option.

Which leaves us – where? As we come up to the ending of this paper, which is partly manifesto and model, partly program notes and progress report, and partly a plea for new history in A.A., we can review the implications of our two sets of Twelve Problems and the answers we have suggested or adumbrated, and see whether we can reasonably go on. And if we can, how? in what direction? to what purpose?

We suggest there was in some sense a “golden moment” particularly appropriate to the founding of A.A., that A.A. was indeed founded by Bill W. but not by him alone (and not entirely by the co-founders or other founders he acknowledged), that A.A. grew by magazine and newspaper publicity and by “apostolic” travels, that it grew rapidly up to a natural growth limit, that the next generation ought to be studied in detail, along with the yet-unstudied founders and others of the first generation, that we need full attention to the continued relations among and between medicine, religion, and A.A., and attention to what might be called the bottom-up politicization of A.A. after 1954.

The history of A.A. should be written because there is an advantage to knowing A.A. history, for understanding A.A. and for understanding the *koinonia*, for understanding the uses of

tradition, for understanding social system development and spontaneous order, and because of its importance in the history of alcoholism and its treatment. It can be done, though only very carefully to avoid overt advocacy casting doubt on the history being written; it must be local history, regional history, and national history, should be written from the inside (with inside knowledge, but not a “winners/losers” mentality) and from the outside (with impartiality), from the top down and from the bottom up, ideally by A.A.s *but not as* A.A.s, necessarily using a model or paradigm, and somehow avoiding the perils of artificial (because anonymous) biography that produces artificial (because anonymous) history. When *From Joyous Garde to Area 59* is completed and published (I hope), we’ll have a better idea whether what we seek can be found. Or will there always be more “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield”?

Washington Notes & Queries no. 26

C. H. K. of Michigan Writes to A.A. about the Washingtonians

Through the kindness (and virtually instant response) of Michelle Mirza, non-alcoholic Director of the A.A. Archives at GSO in New York, the C. H. K. of this communication to the *A.A. Grapevine* (Vol. II, No. 2, July 1945, p. 3, “History Offers Good Lessons for A.A.”) has been identified as Clifford H. K[-----], b. 20 June 1896 in Michigan, d. 23 May 1973, Lee County, Florida), longtime journalist with Michigan newspapers, at this time attached to the Michigan Department of Conservation in Lansing and later (1954) Secretary of the Michigan Conservation Commission (in 1946 Secretary of the new A.A. Group in Lansing). He himself identifies his source as John A. Krout, *The Origins of Prohibition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1925). The long quotation he gives from Krout’s quotation of “an editor” is from the Rev. John Marsh (1788-1868), the longtime editor of the Journal of the American Temperance Union, the Washingtonian’s older (though not much older) rival, scarcely an unbiased source (a point taken up – with others – in the “Note” after Clifford K’s communication, below). A 1954 item records CHK’s appointment as Conservation Secretary: “Clifford K[-----], veteran newspaperman, has been appointed Secretary of the Michigan Conservation Commission succeeding the late Frederick P. Struhsaker. Mr. K[-----] has previously served the Conservation Department as editor of *Michigan Conservation* and assistant chief of the Department’s Education Division.”

History Offers Good Lessons for A.A.

A.A.s need to warn each other about becoming too confident. Over-confidence can have sorry consequences. Individual A.A.s need to take the warning to heart; A.A. as an organization of individuals can also profit from it. All of us, attending meetings of our various groups, have heard, and taken part in, conversations like this:

“D’ja read that story about A.A. in this week’s *Squint*?” “Not yet, but Joe was talkin’ about it. Any good?” “Yeah, a pretty good piece. You know, those editors must think we got somethin’.” “Sure, they wouldn’t be givin’ us space, what with the war and all, if they didn’t think a lot of their readers wanted to know about us.” Rosy contentment settles over speakers and listeners.

How many of the readers of *The Grapevine* have heard about the Washington Temperance Society? It was quite an organization in its time – in the 1840’s. Its organizers

called themselves “reformed drunkards” and they set about “reforming” other drunkards. Does the idea seem familiar?

Claimed 100,000 in 3 Years

They did all right, too. They got going in the Spring of 1840, in Baltimore. In early 1843, they were claiming they had persuaded 100,000 habitual drunkards to sign the pledge. Older temperance organizations had to stand aside – or climb onto the bandwagon. The new society was getting the headlines. It organized a mass meeting in City Hall Park in New York City in 1841 that attracted more than 4,000 listeners – the speakers stood on upturned rum kegs – and it had 1,800 new members when it closed its campaign in that city. There were triumphal parades in Boston – where historic Faneuil Hall was jammed to the doors to hear the speaker – and in other eastern cities. Speakers toured the West and South. The press of the day gave the society uncounted columns of publicity. The society’s unusual methods were NEWS! And then – in less than ten years – the society petered out.

The “why” contains a lesson – and a moral – for A.A. There was no ONE reason, of course. A reason was that the older temperance organizations hired some of the society’s better speakers. That reason couldn’t have wrecked the society if it had had its feet solidly on the ground. Another reason was that politicians looked hungrily at its swelling membership. Some of them climbed aboard the wagon (there is inference that in those times, at least, some politicians could qualify for membership) and they helped to wreck local groups through their efforts to line up votes. The Abolition movement was gaining strength and there was division within groups as men took their stand on the issue of slavery.

The Washingtonians were confident. They rebuffed overtures of older temperance organizations; they scorned old methods. Local groups went their separate ways, made their own mistakes, learned their own lessons. Some, with larger membership, dipped into their treasuries to finance their own publications. There was no over-all direction of editorial policy. Editors of local society publications got into squabbles with editors of other temperance publications.

Factions Within

There was division, in those times, among the older organizations. Some of them plumped for total abstinence as a rule of conduct; others hedged and wanted to direct their efforts against the use of spirituous liquors, accepting use of wines and beers as normal conduct. Some of the more hardy souls were already clamoring for legislation that would outlaw the traffic in beverage alcohol. All of these factions pulled and hauled on the society’s members.

Older temperance organizations were finding it increasingly difficult to interest the public in their aims. The Washingtonians with their unique methods – their missionary work among drunkards, their open-air parades, their “experience” programs that afforded a thrill-seeking public the opportunity of enjoying vicariously the degenerate experience of sodden sinners – were stealing the show. The older organizations borrowed Washingtonian speakers and methods to draw larger audiences to their meetings.

Because the Washingtonian movement, in its beginnings, was concerned only with the reclaiming of drunkards and held that it was none of its affairs if others used alcohol who seemed to be little harmed by it, the makers and sellers of alcoholic beverages looked on the new movement with a tolerant, even approving, eye. The habitual drunk was no more welcome in the nineteenth-century grog-shop than he is in the present-day cocktail lounge.

One Fatal Omission

But in its zeal to increase its membership as rapidly as possible, the society pledged many persons to total abstinence who were intemperate drinkers, probably, but who were not alcoholic in the present-day definition of the term. The Washingtonian movement might have survived, however, might have triumphed over its mistakes, and its enemies (and well-wishers), except for one fatal omission. Its organizers believed they could get along without a Higher Power.

It wasn't a particularly religious time. And inebriates, then as now, had generally lost touch with Him. Many of them, in fact, were outspoken in their denunciations of all of His works, especially as demonstrated in the activities and attitudes of so-called Christian folk. The meetings of the society's groups were conducted usually without reference to Him.

Washingtonians were not atheists; it just hadn't occurred to them that God, as we understand Him could help them to stay sober. In fact, some of them believed that if they invited God into their councils, sectarianism also would push its way in, and their movement would be taken over by one or another of the churches. The society wasn't on God's side and, consequently, it disintegrated.

Source of Strength

An editor of that day wrote: "That the exclusion of all religious forms and the entire abstraction of religion from temperance, was necessary for the reclamation of the drunkard, we have never believed... The drunkard may have felt hostile to religion while in the bar-room and amid the fumes of liquor, and he may feel so after he has reformed and taught to believe that he is better than a Christian, but never did a poor drunkard go up in sincerity to sign the pledge, without feeling himself a prodigal, commencing a return to his Heavenly Father, and needing that Father's help, and who would not have gratefully knelt and listened to a prayer for that help on his new endeavors. And we believe that if the hundreds of thousands of signatures in our country had been accompanied with prayer and some religious enforcement, their power and efficiency would have been incomparably stronger."

Is it necessarily true that there's "nothing new under the sun," or that "history repeats itself"? A.A. IS new, a new partnership with God in a useful endeavor. History NEED NOT repeat, in the case of A.A., the sorry story of the Washingtonians' rise and fall. There are, however, lessons to be learned from history.

Notes: How Clifford K[-----] (or John Allen Krout, from whose book Clifford K[-----] derived his information) could possibly have thought the 1840s were not "a particularly religious time" is not clear. But of course Bill W. did not pick up on the "religious" explanation of the Washingtonians' fall (just as well, given the strong place of religious belief among the founders and leading speakers). What he did pick up on were the subordinate explanations -- insertion of politics (to be sure, Abraham Lincoln -- for example -- gave a speech in support of the Washingtonians in 1842, but that scarcely killed the Washingtonians), the stress of the Abolitionist controversy (but several of the six founders in Baltimore, and particularly John F. Hoss were strongly in the Abolitionist camp), the hiring away of Washingtonian speakers (which didn't really happen -- such speakers as John H. W. Hawkins and John Gough simply

emphasized temperance generally rather than Washingtonian temperance). But I suspect Bill W. picked on that statement to provide a warning for A.A. not to split over the race question. The statement from the “editor” (John Marsh, a dedicated opponent of the Washingtonians, editor of the publication of their slightly older rivals, the American Temperance Union) can scarcely be taken at anything like face value. If I had to seek one basic explanation of the rapid decline of the Washingtonians after 1843, I would put it to the death of the author of their handbook, John Zug, in 1843, at the young age of twenty-five: he was the one temperance man for whom the spread of the Washingtonian movement was the key to the effective spread of the temperance ideal, rather than Washingtonianism being merely a current (and exchangeable) form of temperance. But the readers of this newsletter will be able to judge that for themselves when I complete (or at least make publishable) my work on “John Zug and His ‘Little Book’” – whenever that is. – *Editor*