

TRADITION SIX

“An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.” The program of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) has been working for alcoholics since 1935 and over those years there have been a number of other programs that have been tried, and I won't go in to the names of those programs since A.A. doesn't compete with any of them. As I have observed these attempts to create something that could compete with A.A. they usually simulate some of the ideas that the A.A. program suggests and that seems to appeal to some people who would like to solve their drinking problem without having the Alcoholics Anonymous label attached to their name.

As we all know, there are many rehabilitation organizations that have sprung up after the acceptance of the idea that alcoholism is a disease, and hospitals and institutions do have an important place in the recovery of many of the current members of A.A. There is an awareness in the community about this disease and as a result of that awareness many of the alcoholics that were in denial about their problem, are intervened upon and educated about what they were up against, and ultimately required to attend so many A.A. meetings and once the cat is out of the bag it can never put back in again. This has increased the numbers of people that attend meetings but this is just an introduction to the A.A. program and not a solution to their problem. A good percentage of them do embrace the program and find the answers.

The co-founders and the early members of the program explored the ideas about starting to establish A.A. hospitals, public education on alcoholism, and writing books and manuals and other things to promote and solve alcoholism in the community but as they pursued these ventures they discovered that they were way overshooting the mark and after a variety of trials and errors, cooler minds prevailed and they realized that they should stick to the thing that they knew worked, and they got it right. They came to the conclusion that mixing A.A. with outside affiliations would tear A.A. apart. They abandoned all of those altruistic dreams and focus on what they could do best.

One of the main challenges of this tradition came in the late 1970s and early 1980s when Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) was taking hold due to the sixty's generation drug addiction problems and eventually starting to overflow into the A.A. meetings at that time and A.A. Central Office in New York was trying to find a way of maintaining the integrity of the A.A. program without alienating the members with drug problems. At that time I was a secretary of a closed step study meeting so I brought it up to the group that I didn't want to turn A.A. into a hard line approach to this dilemma so I offered this addendum to the meeting format i.e. *“This is a closed meeting for alcoholics only, addicts may participate, however, all members are encouraged to share in the spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous.”* It was voted in and it seemed to soften the transition that as we moved forward. Shortly thereafter Central Office came out with their singleness of purpose suggestion. Through all of these tests of the integrity of the A.A. program we are still solid and we have the hard working members that oversee these transitions of the policies that keep us strong.

Rick R.