

Tradition Nine: AA Ought Never be Organized; But...

I showed up at the door of the La Puente A.A. group on Oct. 15, 1969, at the age of 28 and was greeted by a group of people that were in their 50s and 60s, one of which owned the little meeting house and the group paid rent to him. There never was a problem with the exchange of money between him and the group each month, as I look back on it today, mainly because his motives were always unselfish and never about profiting from us. If anything, it could have easily been more about him *not* accepting enough rent money to make it clear that we were not receiving outside help. After a few years, I was still much younger than anyone in the group and was treated and mentored by most of them with love and kindness. One day they had to hold elections to have a turnover of the meeting officers. Someone nominated him for the job as treasurer and inquired if there was anyone opposed. I, sheepishly, raised my hand. They all looked at me with a surprised look on their faces. "You oppose him being treasurer?" they asked. Yes, I replied. Why? they asked. Because I think it would be a conflict of interest, and even the appearance of impropriety should not be acceptable in AA. They all looked at each other with big smiles on their faces and began, one by one, hugging me, some with tears of joy in their eyes, and the last thing I heard from our perspective treasurer was, "OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES COMES WORDS OF WISDOM." I felt totally safe in their presents, to live by the principles that they themselves had taught me.

Anyone who has read through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and has heard of the trials and the tribulations they went through when forming up the guidelines for how AA deals with the everyday tasks, knows that it wasn't easy. Sitting in on a board meeting of an Alano Club will give you some idea of what a daunting undertaking it can be. I personally respect those that are willing to do it. We in AA can enjoy the fruits of their labors and even complain about their rules changes and rent adjustments etc. and not have to be saddled with the responsibilities. Out of sight, out of mind. Alano Clubs can be organized but thank God that the Ninth Tradition is in place to keep the spirit of AA intact or I don't see how it could have survived. When I hear AA members complaining about the club's Board of Directors I simply say, "I like sausage, but I don't want to see how they make it."

That simple example is something we can look at and get a basic idea of why we need traditions like: "*AA. as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*" The book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was published in the year 1939 after only about 100 men and women were sober. The first 164 pages have never had to be edited and that is phenomenal. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions was first published in the year 1953 and has been edited slightly in the wording of the long form in the front of the book to compensate for necessary changes in the way AA adjusts to current developments. I know this because my book was the third printing (1966) and the long form in the back of my edition is worded slightly different than the long form of the traditions which is in the front of the current editions. During that, approximately, 14 year period between those initial printings, they found many, many issues that had to be resolved if AA had any chance of survival, after all, The Washingtonians and the Oxford Group had some success before they let outside matters destroy their primary goal, which was sobriety.

Tradition Nine, short and to the point, gives AA a way to get the work done in the trenches that would be too large of a task to expect volunteers to accomplish over any length of time. The one feature I see that is very important here is that these committees get the material matters accomplished, with the spiritual oversight of the members that they serve. The decisions are based, on a group conscience type of approach where everyone gets one vote, and then we let those wonderful and dedicated sausage makers to the hard work. God bless them for without them I don't know if this could all happen.

The last thing I want to address is the fact that we are not an organization like most other societies are, and that's hard to explain, but I'll try. Recently I was watching a TV news program about a person who was sent to AA and as many of those sent here against their will do, he/she had a bad time of it, and claimed that AA caused him/her irreparable damage. He/she hired an attorney and tried to file a law suit against Alcoholics Anonymous. On this broadcast they went to New York Central Office and when they got there and asked for the person in charge. SURPRISE, there was no one there the fit that description. After trying to reword it in order to find the PRESIDENT/CEO or what-ever, there was no one to file against. The press people were amused by the situation and so was I. Each member in AA is equal to the next and there are no laws. This is a worldwide movement, and there is no one in charge of anyone else. I REST MY CASE.

Rick R.