

Tradition 7 // Twelve and Twelve Notes

Short Form: "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

Long Form: The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

Traditions Checklist, from the AA Grapevine

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?
7. Does being self---supporting in A.A. pertain to anything other than money?
8. What parts of your life are you not fully self---supporting?

Note on Inflation and references to dollar amounts:

One dollar in 1939 would have the spending power today of \$18.00. The first edition sold for \$3.50 in 1939, or \$63 accounting for inflation. The \$5 donation mentioned on p162 would be approximately \$90.00 today. In 1939, Gas was 10 cents per gallon, the average cost of a new car was \$640, and a 1 pound steak was roughly 20 cents.

AA General Service Office

A.A.'s General Service Board is comprised of 14 alcoholics who represent our Class B trustees and seven nonalcoholic, Class A trustees.

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P161: One AA Group was given \$5,000 to do with what it would.

1938 - February, Willard Richardson asked Frank Amos to visit Akron and make a report on the young Fellowship of alcoholics. Amos' report was detailed and quite favorable. It highlighted Dr Bob's financial situation and suggested actions that should be taken to help him. Richardson sent Amos' report to John D Rockefeller Jr urging a donation of \$5,000 a year (\$82,000 today) for one or possibly two years. Note: there are errors in AA literature on the amount Rockefeller was asked to donate. A May 1947 Grapevine article (LOH 61) by Bill W states that the recommended donation was \$30,000 (\$492,000 today) and then later in AACOA (150) that it was \$50,000 (\$820,000 today). Both these amounts are greatly exaggerated based on GSO-AC records. It is not clear where Bill W got the figures he cited. (SM S3, BW-RT 246, LR 197) Then, on March 17, Rockefeller replied to Richardson that it was contrary to the policy of his philanthropies to fully fund a charitable enterprise unless it was decided to carry it indefinitely. Rockefeller declined to make a donation for the second year but provided \$5,000 to be held in a fund in the Riverside Church treasury. Much of the fund was used to assist Dr Bob by paying off the mortgage to his home. The remainder provided Bill and Dr Bob (who were both in very difficult financial straits) with \$120 a month (\$2,000 today) so that they could continue to dedicate themselves full time to the Fellowship. (BW-RT 247, AACOA 149-151, DBGO 135, PIO 187-188, GSO-AC)

P165, Q+A on donations to GSO and bequests (after death donations)

Question: Is there a limit to how much an A.A. member can contribute to G.S.O.?

Answer: Yes. That limit is \$3,000 a year.

Question: Can people leave money to G.S.O. in their wills?

Answer: Bequests in wills are acceptable only from A.A. members, with a maximum of \$5,000 from any one person, and only on a onetime basis—not in perpetuity.

Question: Can a non-A.A. member make a memorial contribution to G.S.O. in honor of an A.A. member who has passed away?

Answer: Though G.S.O. deeply appreciates these offers, we return checks—whether they are in memoriam or otherwise—to all non A.A.s. A.A. does not accept contributions from non-members. When we receive a memorial contribution at G.S.O., we return the check with a letter letting the individual know of our tradition of self-support. G.S.O. explains to non-members what can be one of the most baffling aspects of our Fellowship.

source: AA Guidelines on Finance, MG-15

Other Historical Info related to Tradition Seven

1940 - February 8, John D Rockefeller Jr held a dinner for AA at the Union League Club in NY City. 75 out of 400 invited guests attended. Nelson Rockefeller hosted in the absence of his ill father. The dinner produced much favorable national publicity for AA and raised \$2,200 (\$36,000 today) from the attendees (\$1,000 from Rockefeller). Rockefeller and the dinner

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guests continued to contribute about \$3,000 a year up to 1945 when they were asked to stop. The Alcoholic Foundation received the donations as well as income from sales of the Big Book. (LR 197, BW-RT 264-267, AACOA viii, 182-187, NG 92-94, BW-FH 109-112, PIO 232-235).

1942 - Board Trustee A LeRoy Chipman asked John D Rockefeller Jr and his 1940 dinner guests for a loan of \$8,500 (\$120,000 today) to buy back the remaining outstanding shares of Works Publishing stock. Rockefeller lent \$4,000, his son Nelson \$500 and the other dinner guests \$4,000 at 3% interest. By acquiring all the outstanding shares it ensured that complete ownership of the Big Book would be held in trust for the entire AA Fellowship. (AACOA 189, BW-FH 110-111, SM 57, LOH 148, AACOA says \$8,000, GSO-AC)

1945 - The Alcoholic Foundation wrote to John D Rockefeller Jr and the 1940 dinner guests that AA no longer needed their financial help. Big Book royalties could look after Dr Bob and Bill and group contributions could pay the office expenses. If these were insufficient, a reserve accumulated from literature sales could meet the deficit. In total Rockefeller and the dinner guests donated \$30,700 (\$394,000 today). The donations were viewed as loans and paid back out of Big Book income. This finally led to the principle of being fully self-supporting declining all further outside contributions and later formed the basis of Tradition Seven. Rockefeller's custom was to forgive \$1 of debt (\$14 today) for each \$1 repaid. (AACOA 203-208) ** NOTE: Bill received 15% of each book sale in royalties.

Source Reference: AACOA: AA Comes of Age; BW-FH: Bill W, by Francis Hartigan; BW-RT: Bill W, by Robert Thomsen; GSO-AC: General Service Office Archives Collection; LOH: The Language of the Heart; LR: Lois Remembers, by Lois Wilson; NG: Not God, By Ernest Kurtz; PIO: Pass it On; SM: AA Service Manual

Glossary

Aversion (p160): Opposition of mind; fixed dislike; antipathy; disinclination; reluctance.

Benefactors (p161): a person who makes a bequest or endowment, as to an institution.

Endowed (p161): To furnish with money or its equivalent

Habitual (p160): Formed or acquired by habit or use

Intimation (p163): A hint; an obscure or indirect suggestion or notice

Lavishly (p160): excessively

Supposition (p160): That which is supposed; hypothesis; conjecture;

Piously (p163): characterized by a hypocritical concern with virtue or religious devotion;

Prudent (p165): Frugal; economical; not extravagant;

Tousled (p162): in disorder; tumbled;

“Waxed Prosperous” (p161): Grew (into financial success)

Wrought (p160): worked