



MARKINGS

YOUR ARCHIVES INTERCHANGE

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THE OXFORD GROUP: FORERUNNER OF A.A.

An airline pilot called it "a wonder drug that makes real human beings out of people." A newspaper man wrote "It's not an institution/ It's not a point of view/ It starts a revolution/ By starting one in you."

They were talking about the Oxford Group, the chief forerunner of A.A. The founder or "initiator" as he called himself, was a tall impeccably dressed man with a reserved manner and owlish features; to many he appeared an improbable prophet.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1878, Frank Buchman started his career as a Lutheran minister. After a series of personal disappointments, he became a "changer of men" and launched the Oxford Group between 1916-1920. The group established high ethical standards for its members and urged them to aspire to the four absolutes: absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love. These absolutes become the standard for evaluating individual progress.

Possibly the most important single feature of group life was the practice of confession or "sharing." The early days of the group's development were characterized by experiences in which members stood before audiences to tell about their failures.

Buchman gained access to the high society of his day and inspired a deep devotion among his followers, partly because of his remarkable ability with language. He would couch his message in folksy, easily understood metaphors: "If a man's got eye trouble, it's no use throwing eye medicine at him from a second story window" and "Don't put the hay so high a mule can't reach it."

By the 1930's the Oxford Group had attracted many alcoholics; and some stayed sober.

In the mid-1930's, Bill W. came in contact with the Oxford Group at the Calvary Episcopal Church in New York, which conducted a mission for alcoholics. On a business trip to Akron, he found himself struggling with his drinking urge and looked around for some other alcoholic who might be having similar difficulty. He met Dr. Bob who, coincidentally, also had been associated with the Oxford Group.

As these two men shared their experiences, they became aware of the value of spiritual principles, fellowship and a common bond, such as they had in their alcoholism. Moving from weakness to strength, they felt they could reach out to help others who were struggling with alcoholism, and so Alcoholics Anonymous was born.

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SERIALLY . . . THE ARCHIVAL HANDBOOK

In this and subsequent issues of MARKINGS we will offer suggestions for setting up an ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS ARCHIVAL REPOSITORY. These suggestions can eventually comprise a handbook which your Area Archivist might consolidate, utilize and pass on.

Like the A.A. program itself, the sections that follow here and in future issues are neither ground rules nor laws. They are offered as suggestions only, guides to aid you in deciding what to collect, how to preserve and classify the material, and how to help researchers. G.S.O. policy guidelines are presented — subject to whatever modifications and changes which may be necessary for your particular set of circumstances. Let us keep in mind . . .

" . . . We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian . . . It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our file in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion . . . we want to keep on enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full-length history to come. . . "

Bill W. 1957

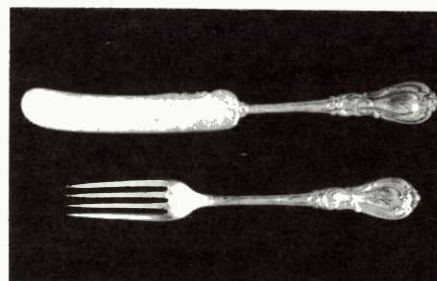
PLANNING AND SETTING UP AN ARCHIVAL CENTER WHY ESTABLISH AN ARCHIVES (1)

There is both a need and an obligation to preserve the experience, history and memorabilia of the Fellowship. The existing correspondence, records, photographs, newspaper and magazine articles of these years need to be collected, preserved and

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Baby Cup engraved: "William G. Wilson, Born East Dorset, Vt., Nov. 26, 1895." This was believed given to him by his grandmother Wilson.



This ornately engraved child's knife and fork belonged to Bill Wilson.



Signet ring presented to Bill W. by the men in his World War I command.



Inscription reads: "From Men of Bat. Co. 66th C. A.C., Chalus, France Nov. 1918"

GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF VIRGINIA AREA ARCHIVAL HOLDINGS

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Archives Committee reserves the right to refuse requests that would involve damage to originals, to restrict the use or further reproduction of rare or valuable material; to protect the identity of individuals according to traditions.

USE OF MATERIALS

1. Researchers must present appropriate identification, complete and sign an application for use of the collection. It is preferred that researchers contact the Archivist before arriving to examine the manuscripts or archival collections.
2. Visitors to the archives will be assigned a special area for research.
3. All briefcases, hats and personal effects must be kept in the area designated by archival personnel.
4. Visitors using archival material are limited to one box at a time. You are requested to remove only one folder at a time. Records must be kept in the order in which they are in the folders. Papers seemingly in disorder should be brought to the attention of the Archivist. Users must not attempt to arrange records.
5. Materials must not be taken from designated areas in the archives.

PUBLICATION OF MATERIALS

1. Permission to publish any part of materials owned by Virginia Area Archives will require special permission from the Archivist, the Archive Committee, the Area Committee Chairman and the Area Delegate.
2. A request form must be submitted in writing in plenty of time to receive administrative consideration.
3. Permission to examine material does not constitute authority to publish it.

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ARCHIVES HISTORY

11 YEARS MARKED BY GROWTH AND CHANGE

You will find no mention of the G.S.O. Archives in the Big Book or in *Alcoholics Comes of Age* for the simple reason that it didn't exist when these books were published. However, in a letter dated 1957, A.A. co-founder Bill Wilson expressed concern for the preservation of original papers and artifacts.

It was not until two years after Bill W.'s death that the trustees Archives Committee was established by the General Service Board and held its first meeting on October 24, 1973. The committee determined the main purpose of the Archives: 1. To give the Fellowship "a sense of its own past and the opportunity to study it." 2. "To keep the record straight so that myth does not predominate over fact."

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONGRESSIONAL INCORPORATION OF A.A. FROM OUR PAST

"The committee has reviewed all of the arguments pro and con on the subject of incorporation, have discussed it with many members of A.A. within the Conferences and outside of it and have come to these conclusions:

1. The evils which caused the question to arise have largely abated.
 2. It would create by law a power to govern which would be contrary to, and violative of, our Traditions.
 3. It would implement the spiritual force of A.A. with a legal power, which we believe would tend to weaken its spiritual strength.
 4. When we ask for legal rights, enforceable in Courts of Law, we by the same act subject ourselves to possible legal regulation.
 5. We might well become endlessly entangled in litigation which, together with the incident expense and publicity, could seriously threaten our very existence.
 6. Incorporation could conceivably become the opening wedge that might engender politics and a struggle for power within our own ranks.
 7. Continuously since its beginning and today, A.A. has been a fellowship and not an organization. Incorporation necessarily makes it an organization.
 8. We believe that "spiritual faith" and a "way of life" cannot be incorporated.
 9. A.A. can and will survive as long as it remains a spiritual faith and a way of life to all men and women who suffer from alcoholism."
- "Therefore, keeping in mind the high purpose of the General Service Conference as expressed by the Chairman last year when he said 'We seek not compromise but certainty', your Committee unanimously recommends that Alcoholics Anonymous does NOT incorporate." (Editor's note: The title "Alcoholics Anonymous" is copyrighted and remains the property of the Fellowship.)

THE OXFORD GROUP: FORERUNNER OF A.A.

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Meanwhile, the Oxford Group has moved from small intimate groups to large gatherings. In 1938 it took the name Moral Rearmament, abbreviated to MRA, and increasingly worked with national and world assemblies. A number of the early followers withdrew from the movement, dissatisfied with the shift from individual emphasis to mass methods. Buchman's main theme at the time was, "World changing through life changing," and it led to his downfall.

In the mid-1930's, Buchman tried to meet Adolf Hitler, convinced that even he was not beyond the range of God's love and power to change. He was unsuccessful, but kept trying to reach the dictator through his followers. Consequently, he was branded pro-Nazi.

A.A.'s founders learned from the Oxford Group's rise and fall. It is not by chance that the Preamble reads in part: "A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes."

Another important distinction was anonymity. In the early days, Buchman insisted on anonymity at the public level; later he became convinced that the use of one's name was a component of one's witness and could be used to winning others. Displaying a touch of Madison Avenue, he thought that testimonials could be used to market a satisfying life style, create teamwork in industry, and promote spirituality.

Yet, despite these differences Bill W. would never fail to acknowledge the profound influence of the Oxford Group in the rise of A.A. Speaking at the 20th anniversary meeting of the Fellowship, he said, ". . . the early Alcoholics Anonymous got its ideas of self-examination, acknowledgement of character defects, restitution for harm done, and working with others straight from the Oxford Group."

PAPER: CLEANING AND REPAIR

The solution to several preservation problems dealing with paper cleaning and repair, such as soiled pages, flattening creases, under book pages, and repairing, backing and laminating paper have been grouped together in this section. The procedures are simple, and with care and patience they can be carried out well.

CLEANING PAPER COVERS

Materials and Tools:

1. Opaline Pad
2. Soft bristle brush
3. Gauze or soft cloth
4. Pink Pearl eraser
5. Cotton swabs

Release cleaning granules from an Opaline pad onto the paper by rotating and pressing the pad between the palms of your hands. Gently rub the granules across the cover with your fingertips. As the granules absorb the dirt and darken, brush them off with a soft brush or gauze, making sure that all are removed.

Gently rubbing a Pink Pearl eraser across the paper is another way to remove dirty spots or smudges. Be careful with paper-covered books, because excessive rubbing can remove the surface of the paper.

CLEANING PRINTED LEAVES/PAGES

The following instructions are intended for use in cleaning only printed leaves or pages of a book. Do not attempt to clean works of art on paper in this way. Paint, charcoal, and pastels have their own inherent properties and should be left to the expertise of a professional art restorer.

Materials and Tools:

1. Opaline Pad
2. Pink Pearl eraser
3. Index card or 5 mil Mylar
4. Soft brush

Before attempting to clean paper, *carefully* consider the condition of each individual sheet or leaf. Brittle paper should not be cleaned, as abrasive action can cause it to crumble or tear. However, if the paper is only slightly soiled and otherwise in good condition, it can be cleaned with an Opaline pad. Heavily soiled leaves, dirty smudges, or pencil marks can usually be removed with a Pink Pearl eraser.

Any kind of soil removal must be undertaken with care, using a light touch. Always work from the center of the page toward the edge. When erasing along the edge of a page, it is advisable to support the edge with an index card or a similar piece of 5 mil Mylar to prevent tearing. Erase in small sections *toward the edge* of the page onto the support. After each portion is completed, move the support and proceed to the next area. Particles from the eraser should be swept from the page and the gutter margin with a soft brush.

. . . GUIDELINES

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WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

The Virginia Area Archives reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order, if in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law and the Twelve Traditions of A.A.

“ . . . TO SO FEW ”

Travers C., Bristol, England

It was in the early sixties that I first visited my sponsor's private rooms in Dublin. My first impression was that his natural habitat resembled an “OLD CURIOSITY SHOP” or, to put it bluntly, the back room of a purveyor of junk.

It was full of piles of old books, magazines and pamphlets, often encrusted with dust, and a myriad of nick-nacks and bric-a-brac, which seemed to have no connection with his personality or character. I knew but little — as my visits to him continued, that tangled mess of paraphernalia, which obviously meant so much to him, began bit by bit to take me over. This was his collection of memorabilia, collected during his years of active membership in the Fellowship. Slowly, he began to introduce me to each book, each signed photograph, each piece of his collection — simple introductions, such as “this is a signed photograph of Bob”, “here is a photograph of Bill with his violin, you knew, of course, that we both played the violin”, “this prayer book was given to me by Sister Ignatia . . . you may care to see what she has written in the flyleaf”, “here is a photograph with some friends in Oklahoma visiting an Indian Reservation trying to set up a new Meeting.”

During these early visits I felt a great change coming about in me. For the very first time “AA Comes of Age” became a living book. Bit by bit, I began to be emotionally captivated by what I had first viewed as a load of junk until I began to handle each item with a reverence never shown by me toward any material substance before. This pile of junk had to me become a cross between Aladdin's Cave and Pandora's Box. It was no longer just his . . . it was my roots and my history as well. For the first time I was to be in touch emotionally with the early members of AA. I suppose this was the beginning of my involvement with others.

Seeing that I was hooked, Sackville began to encourage me to collect — simple items at first — menus

of dinners, programmes of Conventions, photographs, to make notes of dates. I think he knew that in fact he was performing a very valuable 12th step.

One of the first things I did on the death of my sponsor in 1979 was to gather together all the letters, photographs, convention and anniversary programmes, together with more tangible memorabilia that I had in my possession, relating to Sackville's involvement with the formation and growth of Europe's first Group. Encouraged by what I had, I began to collect anything relating to the start of AA, not only in my own area, but also in the whole of England. I tried to contact other people, who I felt might be interested in joining me in this work. Regrettably with no response.

I tried unsuccessfully to “12th Step” into this work the Secretary of my Group. She could neither see the point or the need of gathering material.

I was fortunate that year to attend the World Convention in New Orleans with her. I persuaded her to attend, very reluctantly, an early morning workshop led by Nell Wing. That was the turning point. She left that workshop completely converted, full of enthusiasm for Archives, which I am delighted to say has in the past four years never waned.

We formed a little Committee and our work began in earnest. The following year we were able to hold at the Bristol Reunion our first Archives Meeting. 1982 and 1983 saw the Reunions in Bristol holding larger Archives Meetings, and an Archives Room, with our growing collection, being on display each year. As a result, we were able to involve other members in other parts of the country. We received great co-operation from our friends in Ireland through the late Gerry D., and also great encouragement from Nell and Frank. We were really on our way.

Then came a bonus. Like most bonuses in Recovery, it was never envisaged by me, never asked for, and came as a true gift. It happened this way:

Our little Committee's first priority was always to trace back origins, as

far as we could go, with surviving members, tape their early recollections, and piece together the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. It was very much like joining together unrelated pieces of material to make what eventually has turned out to be the most exquisite patchwork quilt of Recovery. Very often the pieces were only names. We had difficulty in tracing some of them. Some had died, many were lost in the mists for ever, but a few we eventually got through to in all kinds of situations. They were living in Homes for Senior Citizens, Homes for Retired Officers, and some in Geriatric Hospitals. Their ages ranged from 75 to 94. Most of them had not had active contact with the Fellowship for some years. Nearly all were extremely cooperative and most willing to help our project. We just sat with them, together with a cassette recorder, and encouraged gently their recall. It slowly began to flow . . . Names . . . Places . . . People. Very often a name would be mentioned, which was that of someone we had already seen. They were delighted to know that the other person was alive, and to have news of them, and they nearly always asked if it were possible to contact these other “Ghosts of the Present”, who were still very much alive, and active members in the speaker's recall. I saw miracles begin to happen before my eyes — long forgotten members being contacted by their old Groups — isolated, institutionalized — members once again, through Archives involvement, being stimulated in such a way that they again wanted to be a part of our whole. Because of deafness, blindness, financial and health considerations, sometimes they were unable to make direct contact themselves and used me as a messenger boy extraordinary, conveying their very special message of experience, strength, and hope to each other — ALL THIS because of their new-found and re-kindled vitality as a result of once again being needed.

“HE WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO CREATE THE FELLOWSHIP YOU CRAVE”