



Carry the Message

June, 2007

The Huron Valley Area Intergroup Newsletter

Serving the Recovery Community since 1979

Upcoming Area Events

**June 3, 2007 (1st Sunday): CMIA Area
32 Monthly Meeting:**

**Local 892
601 Woodland
Saline, MI**

Doors Open at 9:00 am for Coffee and
doughnuts. Info: www.cmia32.org

**June 16, 2007 (3rd Saturday): 4:00
p.m. HVAI Board meeting WILL BE
HELD AT SOBERFEST IN WEST
PARK, ANN ARBOR—SEE YOU
THERE!**

**June 18, 2007 (3rd Monday): 7:00 p.m.
District 4 Monthly Meeting**

Ann Arbor Community Center

625 N. Main Street, Ann Arbor

June 21, 2007 (3rd Thursday):

District 8 Monthly Meeting

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 200 St. Paul
Street, Brighton

**June 15–16th, 2007: OCYPAA camp-
out Indian Mary Campground.** For Info:
(541) 520-2975

**June 16th, 2007: SOBERFEST!
12—8 p.m. Great Food!! Great
Music!!! (Coon, Funkilinium,
Noteworthy, First Class, The
Lemon James Band)!!!!** at West
Park, 7th and Miller, Ann Arbor.
FREE!!!! Bring lawn chairs and/
or blankets

Treatment Committee Members Needed

I am currently serving as the Treatment
Facility Committee (TFC) Chairperson
for District 4 and am in need of dedicated
AAs interested in serving as a committee
member. The primary purpose of TFCs is
to carry the message of Alcoholics
Anonymous to the alcoholic who still
suffers in Treatment Facilities. You can
find more information about what a TF
Committee does at www.aa.org under AA
guidelines (<http://snipurl.com/1mto4>).

The committee member position entails
a 2 year commitment to attend monthly
TFC meetings, study committee related
materials, and make presentations to local
treatment facility clients and staff on what
AA is and does.

Qualifications for committee members
can vary but AA experience suggests that
solid sobriety, a knowledge of the Tradi-
tions, and absolute dependability are
needed.

Our regular meeting time is currently the
first Monday of the month at 6 PM at
Denny's on Washtenaw. Our next meet-
ing is on Monday June 4th at 6 PM.

If you are interested in serving please
email me at [kittensinmy-
hair@hotmail.com](mailto:kittensinmy-hair@hotmail.com) or call 734.678.2478.

In service,
Shannon T.
Treatment Facilities Committee Chair,
District 4, Area 32

Thank You for your May Contribu- tions to the HVAI!

Ann Arbor Walking Straight Group

Ann Arbor Women's Steps to Serenity

Ann Arbor Sober Now Group

Belleville BB Study Group

Ypsilanti Sat. Night at St. Joe's Group

Ann Arbor Mon. Night on Main Group

Ann Arbor Wed 9:30 am Group

Ypsilanti Tue. Attitude Adjustment

Ann Arbor Fri. 12 Steps Delones Center

Dexter Group

Ypsilanti Attitude Adjustment Group

Belleville Keeping It Simple Group

Belleville Wed. BB Group

Ypsilanti New Beginnings Group

Ann Arbor Another Second Chance Group

Ann Arbor Singleness of Purpose

Ann Arbor AA Open Study

Send Your Voluntary 7th Tradition Contributions To:

**Huron Valley Area Intergroup
31 South Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197**

**District 4
Washtenaw County Treasurer
Box 971502
Ypsilanti, MI 48197**

**Central Michigan Intra-Area 32
C.M.I.A. Area 32 Treasurer
2900 East Wildermuth Road, Owosso,
MI 48867**

**AA World Service
Grand Central Station
P.O. Box 459
New York, NY 10164-0423**

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This Matter of Honesty

Bill W.

August 1961

The problem of honesty touches nearly every aspect of our lives. There are, for example, the widespread and amazing phenomena of self-deception. There are those rather dreadful brands of reckless truth-telling, which are so often lacking in prudence and love. Then there are those countless life situations in which nothing less than utter honesty will do, no matter how sorely we may be tempted by the fear and pride that would reduce us to half-truths or inexcusable denials.

Let's first see what self-deception can do to one's integrity.

Well remembered is the comfort I used to take from an exaggerated belief in my own honesty. My New England kinsfolk had thoroughly taught me the sanctity of all business commitments and contracts. They insisted that "a man's word is his bond." I delighted in the Lincoln story which tells how Honest Abe once walked six miles to return the six pennies he had overcharged a poor woman at his grocery. After this rigorous conditioning, business honesty always came easy, and it stayed with me. Even in Wall Street, where I landed years later, I never flim-flamed anyone.

However, this small fragment of easy-won virtue did produce some interesting liabilities. I was so absurdly proud of my business standards that I never failed to whip up a fine contempt for those of my fellow Wall Streeters who were prone to short-change their customers. This was arrogant enough, but the ensuing self-deception proved even worse. My prized business honesty was presently converted into a comfortable cloak under which I could hide the many serious flaws that beset other departments of my life. Being certain of this one virtue, it was easy to conclude that I had them all. For years

on end, this prevented me from taking a good look at myself. This is a very ordinary example of the fabulous capacity for self-deception that nearly all of us can display at times. Moreover, the deception of others is nearly always rooted in the deception of ourselves.

As further illustrations, two extreme cases come to mind. One shows self-delusion in a very obvious form—obvious, that is, to all but the victim himself. The other depicts the more subtle brand of self-delusion, from which no human being can be entirely exempt.

One of my good friends used to be a safe cracker. He told me this revealing tale. Said he: "You know, Bill, I used to think I was a kind of one-man revolution against society. All over the world I could see the 'have-nots' taking it away from the 'haves.' This seemed very reasonable. After all, those damn 'haves' just wouldn't share their wealth. The revolutions that took it away from them were apt to get a lot of applause. But guys like me, who could also make those 'haves' share their wealth, got no such glad hand. After a while I figured this out: the plain fact was that nobody liked burglars. Revolutions, yes—but burglars, no. Anyway, I couldn't see anything wrong about blowing safes, excepting getting caught. Even after years in jail, I still couldn't see it. When AA showed up, I slowly began to get it through my head that there were good revolutions and bad ones. Bit by bit it dawned on me how I'd completely fooled myself. I could see that I had been pretty crazy. How I could have been that dumb, I'll never be able to explain in any other way."

Now I have another AA friend, a good and gentle soul. He recently joined one of the great religious orders, one in which the friars spend many hours a day in contemplation. So my friend has plenty of time to take his inventory. The more he looks, the more unconscious self-deception he finds. And the more aston-

ished he becomes at the elaborate and devious excuse-making machinery by which he had been justifying himself. He has already come to the conclusion that the prideful righteousness of "good people" may often be just as destructive as the glaring sins of those who are supposedly not so good. So he daily looks inward upon himself and then upward toward God, the better to discover just where he stands in this matter of honesty. Out of each of his meditations there always emerges one dead certainty, and this is the fact that he still has a long way to go.

Just how and when we tell the truth—or keep silent—can often reveal the differences between genuine integrity and none at all. Step Nine of AA's program emphatically cautions us against misusing the truth when it states: "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." Because it points up the fact that the truth can be used to injure as well as to heal, this valuable principle certainly has a wide-ranging application to the problem of developing integrity.

In AA, for instance, we talk a great deal about each other. Provided our motives are thoroughly good, this is not in the least wrong. But damaging gossip is quite something else. Of course, this kind of scuttlebutt can be well grounded in fact. But no such abuse of the facts could ever be twisted into anything resembling integrity. It can't be maintained that this sort of superficial honesty is good for anyone. So the need to examine ourselves is very much with us. Following a gossip binge we can well ask ourselves these questions: Why did we say what we did? Were we only trying to be helpful and informative? Or were we not trying to feel superior by confessing the other fellow's sins? Or, because of fear and dislike, were we not really aiming to damage him?" This would be an honest attempt to examine ourselves, rather than the other fellow. Here we see the difference between the use of the truth

and its misuse. Right here we begin to regain the integrity we had lost.

Sometimes, though, our true motives are not so easily determined. There are times when we think we must reveal highly damaging facts so that we may stop the depredations of certain evildoers. “All for the good of AA”—or what have you—now becomes our cry. Armed with this often false justification, we righteously press our attack. True enough, there may be a genuine need to remedy a damaging condition. True enough, we may have to make use of some unpleasant facts. But the real test is how we handle ourselves. We must be ever so certain that we are not pots who call the kettles black. Therefore it is wise if we pose ourselves these questions: “Do we really understand the people who are involved in this situation? Are we certain that we have *all* of the facts? Is any action or criticism on our part really necessary? Are we positive that we are neither fearful nor angry? Only following such a scrutiny can we be sure to act with the careful discrimination and in the loving spirit that will always be needed to maintain our own integrity.

Now here is another aspect of the honesty problem. It is very possible for us to use the alleged dishonesty of other people as a most plausible excuse for not meeting our own obligations. I once had a spell of this myself. Some rather prejudiced friends had exhorted me never to go back to Wall Street. They were sure that the rampant materialism and double-dealing down there would be sure to stunt my spiritual growth. Because this sounded so high-minded, I continued to stay away from the only business that I knew.

When finally my household went quite broke, I woke up to the fact that I hadn't been able to face the prospect of going back to work. So I returned to Wall Street after all. And I have ever since

been glad that I did. I needed to rediscover that there are many fine people in New York's financial district. Then, too, I needed the experience of staying sober in the very surroundings where alcohol had cut me down. I did receive all these benefits and a great deal more. Indeed, there was one colossal dividend that resulted directly from my grudging decision to re-enter the market place. It was a Wall Street business trip to Akron, Ohio, in 1935 that first brought me face to face with Dr. Bob—AA's cofounder-to-be. So the birth of AA itself actually hinged on the fact that I had been trying to meet my bread-and-butter responsibilities.

We must now leave the absorbing topic of self-delusion and look at some of those trying life situations which we have to meet foursquare and head-on. Suppose we are handed an employment application that asks, “Have you ever suffered from alcoholism, and were you ever hospitalized?” Here, we AAs can assuredly make a good report of ourselves. Almost to a man we believe that nothing short of the absolute truth will do in situations of this type. Most employers respect our Fellowship and they like this rugged brand of honesty, especially when we reveal our AA membership and its results. Of course many another life problem calls for this identical brand of forthrightness. For the most part, situations requiring utter honesty are clear-cut, and readily recognizable. We simply have to face up to them, our fear and pride regardless. Failing to do this, we shall be sure to suffer those ever mounting conflicts which can only be resolved by plain honesty.

There are, nevertheless, certain occasions where reckless truth-telling may create widespread havoc and permanent damage to others. Whenever this seems possible, we are likely to find ourselves in a bad jam indeed. We shall be torn between two temptations. When conscience agonizes us enough, we may well cast all prudence and love to the winds. We may try to buy our freedom by telling the brutal truth, no matter who gets hurt or how much. But this is

not the usual temptation. It is far more probable that we shall veer to the other extreme. We will paint for ourselves a most unrealistic picture of the awful damage we are about to inflict on others. By claiming to create compassion and love for our supposed victims, we are getting set to tell the Big Lie — and be thoroughly comfortable about it, too.

When life presents us with a racking conflict like this, we cannot be altogether blamed if we are confused. In fact, our very first responsibility is to admit that we *are* confused. We may confess that, for the time being, we have lost all ability to tell right from wrong. Most difficult, too, will be the admission that we cannot be certain of receiving God's guidance because our prayers are so cluttered with wishful thinking. Surely this is the point at which we must seek the counsel of our finest friends. There is nowhere else to go.

Had I not been blessed with wise and loving advisers, I might have cracked up long ago. A doctor once saved me from death by alcoholism because he obliged me to face up to the deadliness of that malady. Another doctor, a psychiatrist, later on helped me save my sanity because he led me to ferret out some of my deep-lying defects. From a clergyman I acquired the truthful principles by which we AAs now try to live. But these precious friends did far more than supply me with their professional skills. I learned that I could go to them with any problem whatever. Their wisdom and their integrity were mine for the asking. Many of my dearest AA friends have stood with me in exactly this same relation. Oftentimes they could help where others could not, simply because they *were* AAs.

Of course we cannot wholly rely on friends to solve all our difficulties. A good advisor will never do all our thinking for us. He knows that each final choice must be ours. He will therefore help to eliminate fear, expediency, and self-deception, so enabling us to make choices which are lov-

ing, wise, and honest.

The choice of such a friend is an all-important matter. We should look for a person of deep understanding, and then carefully listen to what he has to say. In addition, we must be positive that our prospective adviser will hold our communications in the strictest of confidence. Should he be a clergyman or doctor or lawyer, this can be taken for granted. But when we consult an AA friend, we should not be reluctant to remind him of our need for full privacy. Intimate communication is normally so free and easy among us that an AA adviser may sometimes forget when we expect him to remain silent. The protective sanctity of this most healing of human relations ought never be violated.

Such privileged communications have priceless advantages. We find in them the perfect opportunity to be as honest as we know how to be. We do not have to think of the possibility of damage to other people, nor need we fear ridicule or condemnation. Here, too, we have the best possible chance of spotting self-deception.

If we are fooling ourselves, a competent adviser can see this quickly. And, as he guides us out of our fantasies, we are surprised to find that we have few of the usual urges to defend ourselves against unpleasant truths. In no other way can fear, pride, and ignorance be so readily melted. After a time, we realize that we are standing firm on a brand-new foundation for integrity.

Let us therefore continue our several searches for self-deception, great or small. Let us painstakingly temper honesty with prudence and love. And let us never flinch from entire forthrightness whenever this is the requirement.

How truth makes us free is something that we AAs can well understand. It cut the shackles that once bonded us to alcohol. It continues to release us from conflicts and miseries beyond reckoning; it

banishes fear and isolation. The unity of our Fellowship, the love we cherish for each other, the esteem in which the world holds us — all of these are products of such integrity as, under God, we have been privileged to achieve. May we therefore quicken our search for still more genuine honesty and deepen its practice in all our affairs

from *The Best of Bill* copyright the AA Grapevine, Inc.

Dear AA Group or AA Member:

Each AA Group is a member of the Intergroup and a recipient of our services. Your responses to the following Survey questions are vital to the continuous improvement of HVAI's service to you and the still suffering alcoholic. Please mail, drop off, or give completed responses to your Intergroup Rep. Your input will be compiled and the results summarized here and online.

1) Have you personally used a Service provided by the Intergroup?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

2) Does the Intergroup office respond promptly to your requests?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

3) Does HVAI respectfully represent all AA groups in Washtenaw County?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

4) Is non-conference approved literature valuable to you?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

5) Does your group use literature developed for Special Needs people (i.e Braille, Sign Language, Large Print, Audio Tapes, etc)

Always Sometimes Never N/A

6) Do you find Welcome Packets helpful?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

7) Does your group have regular Group

Conscience meetings?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

8) Does your Group Conscience make service contributions?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

9) Does your group use a formula to determine the contributions distribution?

Always Sometimes Never N/A

10) Does your group follow the suggested distribution of excess funds? (i.e 10% District / 10% Area / 30% GSO / 50% Intergroup)

Always Sometimes Never N/A

Below please rate the helpfulness of the following services:

RATING SYSTEM:

- 1- HELPFUL
2- N/A or No Opinion
3- NOT HELPFUL

Help Line Service	___
Office Phone Services	___
Website Meeting List	___
Meeting Directory (Printed)	___
Public Info. Booths & Events	___
Literature Availability	___
Newsletter	___
Treatment Center Outreach	___
Corrections Facilities Outreach	___
Office, Accessibility & Location	___

COMMENTS WELCOME:

Your contribution to HVAI supports: The local AA Service Center, the Help Line, the Web and Printed Meeting Directories, a source for Conference-Approved Literature and Anniversary Tokens, AA Outreach to the area Professionals, Treatment Facilities, local Correctional Facilities and the General Public.