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## VANCOUVER AREA INTERGROUP Primary Purpose

FOURTH EDITION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

PAGES 219-231

[Big Book - 2.08 \(5\) The Vicious Cycle](#)

### THE VICIOUS CYCLE

*How it finally broke a Southerner's obstinacy and destined this  
salesman to start A.A. in Philadelphia.*

January 8, 1938—that was my D-Day; the place, Washington, D.C. This last real merry-go-round had started the day before Christmas, and I had really accomplished a lot in those fourteen days. First, my new wife had walked out, bag, baggage, and furniture; then the apartment landlord had thrown me out of the empty apartment; and the finish was the loss of another job. After a couple of days in dollar hotels and one night in the pokey, I finally landed on my mother's doorstep—shaking apart, with several days' beard, and, of course, broke as usual. Many of these same things had happened to me many times before, but this time they had all descended together. For me, this was It.

Here I was, thirty-nine years old and a complete washout. Nothing had worked. Mother would take me in only if I stayed locked in a small storeroom and gave her my clothes and shoes. We had played this game before. That is the way Jackie found me, lying on a cot in my skivvies, with hot and cold sweats, pounding heart, and that awful itchy scratchiness all over. Somehow, I had always managed to avoid D.T.'s



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#### Monthly Business Mtgs

- ◆ Steering Comm. Mtg. –  
06/12/2023 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ Archives Committee Mtg.-  
06/14/2023 @ 5:30 PM
- ◆ District 27 Committee Mtg.  
06/17/2023 @ 2pm-4pm
- ◆ Intergroup Rep Mtg. –  
06/19/2023 @ 6:30 PM
- ◆ District 7 GSR Mtg. -  
06/22/2023 @ 7:00 PM
- ◆ District 37 GSR Mtg. –  
06/27/2023 @ 7:00 PM



I seriously doubt I ever would have asked for help, but Fitz, an old school friend of mine, had persuaded Jackie to call on me. Had he come two or three days later, I think I would have thrown him out, but he hit when I was open for anything.

Jackie arrived about seven in the evening and talked until three a.m. I don't remember much of what he said, but I did realize that here was another guy exactly like me; he had been in the same laughing academies and the same jails, known the same loss of jobs, same frustrations, same boredom, and the same loneliness. If anything, he had known all of them even better and more often than I. Yet he was happy, relaxed, confident, and laughing. That night, for the first time in my life, I really let down my hair and admitted my general loneliness. Jackie told me about a group of fellows in New York, of whom my old friend Fitz was one, who had the same problem I had, and who, by working together to help each other, were now not drinking and were happy like himself. He said something about God or a Higher Power, but I brushed that off—that was for the birds, not for me. Little more of our talk stayed in my memory, but I do know I slept the rest of that night, while before I had never known what a real night's sleep was.

This was my introduction to this “understanding Fellowship,” although it was to be more than a year later before our Society was to bear the name Alcoholics Anonymous. All of us in A.A. know the tremendous happiness that is in our sobriety, but there are also tragedies. My sponsor, Jackie, was one of these. He brought in many of our original members, yet he himself could not make it and died of alcoholism. The lesson of his death still remains with me, yet I often wonder what would have happened if somebody else had made that first call on me. So I always say that as long as I remember January 8, that is how long I will remain sober.

The age-old question in A.A. is which came first, the neurosis or the alcoholism. I like to think I was fairly normal before alcohol took over. My early life was spent in Baltimore, where my father was a physician and a grain merchant. My family lived in very prosperous circumstances, and while both my parents drank, sometimes too much, neither was an alcoholic. Father was a very well-integrated person, and while mother was high-strung and a bit selfish and demanding, our home life was reasonably harmonious. There were four of us children, and although both of my brothers later became alcoholic—one died of alcoholism—my sister has never taken a drink in her life. Until I was thirteen I attended public schools, with regular promotions and average grades. I have never shown any particular talents, nor have I had any really frustrating ambitions. At thirteen I was packed off to a very fine Protestant boarding school in Virginia, where I stayed four years, graduating without any special achievements. In sports I made the track and tennis teams; I got along well with the other boys and had a fairly large circle of acquaintances but no intimate friends. I was never homesick and was always pretty self-sufficient. However, here I probably took my first step toward my coming alcoholism by developing a terrific aversion to all churches and established religions. At this school we had Bible readings before each meal, and church services four times on Sunday, and I became so rebellious at this that I swore I would never join or go to any church, except for weddings or for funerals .



At seventeen I entered the university, really to satisfy my father, who wanted me to study medicine there as he had. That is where I had my first drink, and I still remember it, for every “first” drink afterwards did exactly the same trick—I could feel it go right through every bit of my body and down to my very toes. But each drink after the first seemed to become less effective, and after three or four, they all seemed like water. I was never a hilarious drunk; the more I drank, the quieter I got, and the drunker I got, the harder I fought to stay sober. So it is clear that I never had any fun out of drinking—I would be the soberest-seeming one in the crowd, and, all of a sudden, I would be the drunkest. Even that first night I blacked out, which leads me to believe that I was an alcoholic from my very first drink. The first year in college I just got by in my studies. I majored in poker and drinking. I refused to join any fraternity, as I wanted to be a freelance, and that year my drinking was confined to one-night stands, once or twice a week. The second year my drinking was more or less restricted to weekends, but I was nearly kicked out for scholastic failure.

In the spring of 1917, in order to beat being fired from school, I became “patriotic” and joined the army. I am one of the lads who came out of the service with a lower rank than when I went in. I had been to OTC the previous summer, so I went into the army as a sergeant but I came out a private, and you really have to be unusual to do that. In the next two years, I washed more pans and peeled more potatoes than any other doughboy. In the army, I became a periodic alcoholic—the periods always coming whenever I could make the opportunity. However, I did manage to keep out of the guardhouse. My last bout in the army lasted from November 5 to 11, 1918. We heard by wireless on the fifth that the Armistice would be signed the next day (this was a premature report), so I had a couple of cognacs to celebrate; then I hopped a truck and went AWOL. My next conscious memory was in Bar le Duc, many miles from base. It was November 11, and bells were ringing and whistles blowing for the real Armistice. There I was, unshaven, clothes torn and dirty, with no recollection of wandering all over France but, of course, a hero to the local French. Back at camp, all was forgiven because it was the End, but in the light of what I have since learned, I know I was a confirmed alcoholic at nineteen.

With the war over and back in Baltimore with the folks, I had several small jobs for three years, and then I went to work soliciting as one of the first ten employees of a new national finance company. What an opportunity I shot to pieces there! This company now does a volume of over three billion dollars annually. Three years later, at twenty-five, I opened and operated their Philadelphia office and was earning more than I ever have since. I was the fair-haired boy all right, but two years later I was blacklisted as an irresponsible drunk. It doesn’t take long. My next job was in sales promotion for an oil company in Mississippi, where I promptly became high man and got lots of pats on the back. Then I turned two company cars over in a short time and bingo—fired again. Oddly enough, the big shot who fired me from this company was one of the first men I met when I later joined the New York A.A. Group. He had also gone all the way through the wringer and had been dry two years when I saw him again.



After the oil job blew up, I went back to Baltimore and Mother, my first wife having said a permanent goodbye. Then came a sales job with a national tire company. I reorganized their city sales policy and eighteen months later, when I was thirty, they offered me the branch managership. As part of this promotion, they sent me to their national convention in Atlantic City to tell the big wheels how I'd done it. At this time I was holding what drinking I did down to weekends, but I hadn't had a drink at all in a month. I checked into my hotel room and then noticed a placard tucked under the glass on the bureau stating "There will be positively NO drinking at this convention," signed by the president of the company. That did it! Who, me? The Big Shot? The only salesman invited to talk at the convention? The man who was going to take over one of their biggest branches come Monday? I'd show 'em who was boss! No one in that company saw me again—ten days later I wired my resignation.

As long as things were tough and the job a challenge, I could always manage to hold on pretty well, but as soon as I learned the combination, got the puzzle under control, and the boss to pat me on the back, I was gone again. Routine jobs bored me, but I would take on the toughest one I could find and work day and night until I had it under control; then it would become tedious, and I'd lose all interest in it. I could never be bothered with the follow-through and would invariably reward myself for my efforts with that "first" drink.

\ After the tire job came the thirties, the Depression, and the downhill road. In the eight years before A.A. found me, I had over forty jobs—selling and traveling—one thing after another, and the same old routine. I'd work like mad for three or four weeks without a single drink, save my money, pay a few bills, and then "reward" myself with alcohol. Then I'd be broke again, hiding out in cheap hotels all over the country, having one-night jail stands here and there, and always that horrible feeling "What's the use—nothing is worthwhile." Every time I blacked out, and that was every time I drank, there was always that gnawing fear, "What did I do this time?" Once I found out. Many alcoholics have learned they can bring their bottle to a cheap movie theater and drink, sleep, wake up, and drink again in the darkness. I had repaired to one of these one morning with my jug, and, when I left late in the afternoon, I picked up a newspaper on the way home. Imagine my surprise when I read in a page-one "box" that I had been taken from the theater unconscious around noon that day, removed by ambulance to a hospital and stomach-pumped, and then released. Evidently I had gone right back to the movie with a bottle, stayed there several hours, and started home with no recollection of what had happened.

The mental state of the sick alcoholic is beyond description. I had no resentments against individuals—the whole world was all wrong. My thoughts went round and round with, What's it all about anyhow? People have wars and kill each other; they struggle and cut each other's throats for success, and what does anyone get out of it? Haven't I been successful, haven't I accomplished extraordinary things in business? What do I get out of it? Everything's all wrong and the hell with it. For the last two years of my drinking, I prayed during every drunk that I wouldn't wake up again.

Three months before I met Jackie, I had made my second feeble try at suicide.



This was the background that made me willing to listen on January 8. After being dry two weeks and sticking close to Jackie, all of a sudden I found I had become the sponsor of my sponsor, for he was suddenly taken drunk. I was startled to learn he had only been off the booze a month or so himself when he brought me the message! However, I made an SOS call to the New York Group, whom I hadn't met yet, and they suggested we both come there. This we did the next day, and what a trip! I really had a chance to see myself from a nondrinking point of view. We checked into the home of Hank, the man who had fired me eleven years before in Mississippi, and there I met Bill, our founder. Bill had then been dry three years and Hank, two. At the time, I thought them just a swell pair of screwballs, for they were not only going to save all the drunks in the world but also all the so called normal people! All they talked of that first weekend was God and how they were going to straighten out Jackie's and my life. In those days we really took each other's inventories firmly and often. Despite all this, I did like these new friends because, again, they were like me. They had also been periodic big shots who had goofed out repeatedly at the wrong time, and they also knew how to split one paper match into three separate matches. (This is very useful knowledge in places where matches are prohibited.) They, too, had taken a train to one town and had wakened hundreds of miles in the opposite direction, never knowing how they got there. The same old routines seemed to be common to us all. During that first weekend, I decided to stay in New York and take all they gave out with, except the "God stuff." I knew they needed to straighten out their thinking and habits, but I was all right; I just drank too much. Just give me a good front and a couple of bucks, and I'd be right back in the big time. I'd been dry three weeks, had the wrinkles out, and had sobered up my sponsor all by myself! Bill and Hank had just taken over a small automobile polish company, and they offered me a job—ten dollars a week and keep at Hank's house. We were all set to put DuPont out of business.

At that time the group in New York was composed of about twelve men who were working on the principle of every drunk for himself; we had no real formula and no name. We would follow one man's ideas for a while, decide he was wrong, and switch to another's method. But we were staying sober as long as we kept and talked together. There was one meeting a week at Bill's home in Brooklyn, and we all took turns there spouting off about how we had changed our lives overnight, how many drunks we had saved and straightened out, and last but not least, how God had touched each of us personally on the shoulder. Boy, what a circle of confused idealists! Yet we all had one really sincere purpose in our hearts, and that was not to drink. At our weekly meeting I was a menace to serenity those first few months, for I took every opportunity to lambaste that "spiritual angle," as we called it, or anything else that had any tinge of theology.



Much later I discovered the elders held many prayer meetings hoping to find a way to give me the heave-ho but at the same time stay tolerant and spiritual. They did not seem to be getting an answer, for here I was staying sober and selling lots of auto polish, on which they were making one thousand percent profit. So I rocked along my merry independent way until June, when I went out selling auto polish in New England. After a very good week, two of my customers took me to lunch on Saturday. We ordered sandwiches, and one man said, “Three beers.” I let mine sit.

After a bit, the other man said, “Three beers.” I let that sit too. Then it was my turn—I ordered, “Three beers,” but this time it was different; I had a cash investment of thirty cents, and, on a ten dollar-a-week salary, that’s a big thing. So I drank all three beers, one after the other, and said, “I’ll be seeing you, boys,” and went around the corner for a bottle. I never saw either of them again.

I had completely forgotten the January 8 when I found the Fellowship, and I spent the next four days wandering around New England half drunk, by which I mean I couldn’t get drunk and I couldn’t get sober. I tried to contact the boys in New York, but telegrams bounced right back, and when I finally got Hank on the telephone he fired me right then. This was when I really took my first good look at myself. My loneliness was worse than it had ever been before, for now even my own kind had turned against me. This time it really hurt, more than any hangover ever had. My brilliant agnosticism vanished, and I saw for the first time that those who really believed, or at least honestly tried to find a Power greater than themselves, were much more composed and contented than I had ever been, and they seemed to have a degree of happiness I had never known.

Peddling off my polish samples for expenses, I crawled back to New York a few days later in a very chastened frame of mind. When the others saw my altered attitude, they took me back in, but for me they had to make it tough; if they hadn’t, I don’t think I ever would have stuck it out. Once again, there was the challenge of a tough job, but this time I was determined to follow through. For a long time the only Higher Power I could concede was the power of the group, but this was far more than I had ever recognized before, and it was at least a beginning. It was also an ending, for never since June 16, 1938, have I had to walk alone. Around this time our big A.A. book was being written, and it all became much simpler; we had a definite formula that some sixty of us agreed was the middle course for all alcoholics who wanted sobriety, and that formula has not been changed one iota down through the years. I don’t think the boys were completely convinced of my personality change, for they fought shy of including my story in the book, so my only contribution to their literary efforts was my firm conviction—since I was still a theological rebel—that the word God should be qualified with the phrase “as we understand Him”—for that was the only way I could accept spirituality.

After the book appeared, we all became very busy in our efforts to save all and sundry, but I was still actually on the fringes of A.A. While I went along with all that was done and attended the meetings, I never took an active job of leadership until February 1940. Then I got a very good position in Philadelphia and quickly found I would need a few fellow alcoholics around me if I was to stay sober. Thus I found myself in the middle of a brand-new group. When I started to tell the boys how we did it in New York and all about the spiritual part of the program, I found they would not believe me unless I was practicing what I preached. Then I found that as I gave in to this spiritual or personality change, I was getting a little more serenity. In telling newcomers how to change their lives and attitudes, all of a sudden I found I was doing a little changing myself. I had been too self-sufficient to write a moral inventory, but I discovered in pointing out to the new man his wrong attitudes and actions that I was really taking my own inventory, and that if I expected him to change, I would have to work on myself too. This change has been a long, slow process for me, but through these latter years the dividends have been tremendous. In June 1945, with another member, I made my first—and only—Twelfth Step call on a female alcoholic, and a year later I married her. She has been sober all the way through, and for me that has been good. We can share in the laughter and tears of our many friends, and most important, we can share our A.A. way of life and are given a daily opportunity to help others. In conclusion, I can only say that whatever growth or understanding has come to me, I have no wish to graduate. Very rarely do I miss the meetings of my neighborhood A.A. group, and my average has never been less than two meetings a week. I have served on only one committee in the past nine years, for I feel that I had my chance the first few years and that newer members should fill the jobs. They are far more alert and progressive than we floundering fathers were, and the future of our fellowship is in their hands. We now live in the West and are very fortunate in our area A.A.; it is good, simple, and friendly, and our one desire is to stay in A.A. and not on it. Our pet slogan is “Easy Does It.”

And I still say that as long as I remember that January 8 in Washington, that is how long, by the grace of God as I understand Him, I will retain a happy sobriety.





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## AA GRAPEVINE TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

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**Tradition Six: An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**

1. Why is it important that we not get involved in outside enterprises?
2. Is it ever wise for a group to lease a small building or endorse an outside event?
3. Are all the officers and members of our local clubhouse familiar with "Guidelines on Clubs," which is available free from GSO?
4. Should the secretary of our group serve on the mayor's advisory committee on alcoholism?
5. Our group's landlord is raising money to pay for a new roof on the building. Should the group make a contribution? What if the landlord specifically asks the group to make a contribution?



## **CONCEPT SIX:**

**On behalf of A.A. as a whole, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.**

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

These powers do not necessarily mean that the trustees govern the groups, as this would go against the Second Tradition. What it does mean, however, is that they have the requisite power to keep the groups afloat. They are in charge of millions of dollars' worth of literature and other materials, in addition to the Reserve Fund. They provide important information to the groups and to the public. And without them, very little—if any—of what AA does overseas would be possible.

It is at this point that we may relate the meaning of Concept VI to the principles of sobriety itself. As we have often said, we cannot do it alone. We must understand the importance of teamwork. We must know when it is important to ask for help. If we harbor control issues and try to get through life on our own willpower, we will often falter. And sometimes, much as the groups must depend on the General Service Board, we must rely upon the help of those who have certain powers which we do not possess. For some, this is intuitive. For others, it will require much in the way of humility.

**We often like to think that we are in charge, whether as delegates from a group or simply as people calling the shots in our own lives. And this illusion quite can be quite reassuring—right up until it is shattered by those little reminders that there are greater forces at work. For examples of this, simply look at people's reactions to political decisions. Nonetheless, our society is one that relies on many authorities. Without them, even those of us who have far less than we should might have even less. Likewise, those who may not always see a vote go in their favor at the General Service Conference must still rely on the Board for many services. No matter who we may perceive to be standing in the way of our control, we must never forget that they can also be quite helpful to us. People who are able to work together will always accomplish more than those who try to do everything alone.**

## Upcoming Events

# JUNE 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Picnic Planning 6pm			1	2	3
4	5 Steering Committee Meeting 6pm	6	7	8	9 Grapevine 4pm	10
11	12 Intergroup Rep Meeting 6:30 pm	13	14 Archives 56:30 pm	15	16	17 #27 District Meeting  <b>IG PICNIC</b>
18	19	20	21	22 #7 District Meeting 7:00 pm	13	24
25	26	27 #37 District Meeting 7:00 pm	28	29	30	



# ARCHIVES CORNER



Welcome to Vancouver Archives, which currently serving Districts 7 and 37.

The Archives Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Intergroup Office . All are welcome!

**SAVE THE DATE:**

**JUNE 2023**

**FOUNDER'S DAY EVENT!**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1

**What:** Long Timer Panel & Full Archives Display – Sponsored by Vancouver Archives (District 7 & District 37)

**When:** Saturday, June 10, 2023

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (panels 1-3 p.m.)

**Location:** The Matson Building (formerly The Saddle Club)  
10713 NE 117th Ave, Vancouver, WA 98662

PLEASE donate your group documents to Archives. Don't throw anything out! We will digitize your records and physically store and preserve your documents, photos, etc.

Feel free to e-mail with any questions or comments:

[dist7archives@area72aa.org](mailto:dist7archives@area72aa.org)

In Service,

## GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS MAY 2023

May 2023	Group Name	Contribution
05/01/2023	Serenity Sisters	30.00
05/01/2023	Eastside Brownbaggers	50.00
05/01/2023	Early Birds	100.00
05/03/2023	A New Morning	220.49
05/05/2023	Minnehaha	280.00
05/05/2023	McGillivray Study Group	74.51
04/05/2023	Men's Fireside	100.00
05/09/2023		100.00
05/09/2023	Cornerstone Group Contribution to Picnic	100.00
05/09/2023	Cornerstone Group	100.00
05/09/2023	The Lighthouse	50.00
05/10/2023	Men's Eastside	250.00
05/10/2023	Miracles At Noon	228.50
05/10/2023	Rock Bottom Recovery	25.00
05/12/2023	Fresh Start	196.00
05/15/2023	East County Women's Group	100.00
05/16/2023	Kalama Sunrise	70.80
05/17/2023	Camas Group	60.70
05/17/2023	First Shot	254.52
05/26/2023	Shoulder to Shoulder	284.00
05/30/2023	She Who Remembers	40.00
05/30/2023	Ridgefield AA	40.00
05/30/2023	Townhouse	40.00
Individual Contributions		120.00



# SHARED BY MEMBERS

## Inside A.A.

Since the Fellowship of A.A. was founded in 1935 it has grown from two members to over 2,000,000. With more than 118,000 groups located in over 180 countries, a broad range of services have developed to help support and guide alcoholics in recovery. Service centers have been established around the world, handling inquiries from suffering alcoholics and those interested in helping them. More than 35 million copies of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the basic text from which the Fellowship got its name, have been published and distributed, and a diverse body of literature is produced in more than 90 languages to reach those who may not yet know about our program of hope and recovery. As A.A. has grown, so have its service needs. Members and committees have recognized the need to carry our message to professionals who work with alcoholics on a regular basis — doctors, judges, clergy and many others; underrepresented populations need information about our program; diverse technologies have opened new opportunities to reach young people and those who face different challenges of accessibility. All of this requires some measure of organization — organization inspired by A.A.’s Responsibility Declaration, which states, “When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

[https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/p-18\\_InsideAA.pdf](https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/p-18_InsideAA.pdf)

Vancouver Area Intergroup 2023 Newsletter will be distributed in the first week of each month instead of the middle of the month.

If you would like to share your :

- AA Birthday on the Calendar
- Experience Strength & Hope
- AA related content or topics
- AA Flyers

In the Upcoming Newsletters please feel free to email :

[vanintgrp@gmail.com](mailto:vanintgrp@gmail.com)

You Are Wanted Needed & Loved!

**\*\*\*\* The Primary Purpose will no longer include the Financial Reports or the Meeting Minutes from either the Steering Committee Meeting or the Intergroups Rep Meeting. Reports and Minutes can now be found on the website under the documents tab.\*\*\*\***

[Documents | Vancouver Intergroup Alcoholics Anonymous \(vancouveraa.org\)](http://vancouveraa.org)

