



# Sobriety in Stumptown

[www.pdxaa.org](http://www.pdxaa.org)  
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Portland Area Intergroup  
825 NE 20th Ave,  
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June 2017  
Volume 10, No. 6

## *June Stories and Art*

### **Step Six and Tradition Six**

*by Eric K., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor*

This month's newsletter submissions are focused on the Sixth Step and Sixth Tradition, as well as the third part in a three part series on relapse, and a section for art, inspired by the Big Book and the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

### **Step Six**

*by George D. from Portland, OR*

"Were entirely ready to have God remove all of these defects of character." For myself, the steps are laid out in sequential and progressive order; that is each step builds upon the previous (as Dr. Bob describes them being a foundation, cornerstone etc.) This begins with the first step clear up to the twelfth step. Steps 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are called the action steps. Again, for myself, the words turn into a phrase, the phrase turns into a statement, and the statement turns into action.

The first three words, "were entirely ready." Question to self: "Were entirely ready for what?" Question: To have God remove all of my character defects?" Answer: Yes. The End.

Ha Ha, and with that, I thought I was done. Uh, not quite. Those who know me will attest under oath, or not under oath, that I tend to be a bit long winded, just a little wordy. Okay, okay, a lot wordy. Please don't tell my sponsor; he'll turn it into a character defect and none of us will make it passed this step. All right, all ready, can we get back to the step.

There are many very good Big Book studies and step study meetings throughout Portland and the metropolitan area. One such group is my home group, Cabana, on 144th and Powell, from 7:30-8:30 Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Monday night meeting started in 1962. In addition to the studies, one can find volumes on the internet concerning character defects.

Does anyone personally know all there is to know about Character Defects? No. What I do know

is the longer I stay sober, the longer I am willing to look at my character defects, then the God of my understanding is more than willing to remove them.

A dear friend of mine, Steven from Cabana, texted me this: “While there’s a lot of emphasis on the seventh step prayer and rightly so, let’s not forget the 6th step prayer.” “God, help me become willing to let go of all the things to which I still cling. Help me to be ready to let you remove all of these defects, that Your Will and Purpose may take their place. Amen.” (Page 76 from the Big Book)

## **Step Six**

*by Mike B. from Portland, OR*

"Were entirely ready to have god remove all these defects of character". Oh yeah, very ready. And I truly was earnest about not wanting to be selfish, or have to be right, or have to have things MY way. But you know, god didn't magically take all the bad stuff away; it still takes work – to this very day! This whole saving my own life thing in AA isn't something you just download to your iPhone and you're all done.

I guess that's why there are six more steps to go; why we go to meetings to be with others of our tribe; gain their wisdom when we're new, and through the years that follow. The advice or experience I share at meetings is for everyone (new or not) to hear, because, personally speaking, I can always learn more or benefit from somebody's heartfelt story.

And maybe when I'm sharing some of my experience, strength and hope, I'm giving away some of those character defects when I'm talking about them, and telling somebody how not to be.

## **Tradition Six**

*by Riley S, Portland, OR*

First a funny story... For probably the entire first year of my sobriety, I thought lest was an old English way of saying unless. Which meant I thought that an AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, unless problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose. So, I thought it was okay to lend our name to outside enterprises if we needed some cash or some land. I've learned a lot about the traditions since then.

I've been sober two and a half years and this last half year or so has been about letting go of my rigid thinking about what I think is right or wrong. It means letting people share about what they want to share about without getting upset, and letting meetings run however their group conscious dictates. It's not up to me whether they'll change, so I might as well accept things as they are. I've found it allots me more peace of mind. What's so interesting about this is how it applies to the traditions. I was told that you can't break a tradition, you can only break anonymity—you can choose not to follow a tradition, and that I've learned is okay.

Part of this work in letting go has been as a result of reworking the steps from a different perspective. I attend a men's meeting, where we have a wishy washy primary purpose. While it is an AA meeting, in our preamble we warn people that if you're just getting sober, this meeting might not be for you, because we focus on something other than not drinking. This meeting has helped me immensely. When I'm upset I think, “Oh this meeting's breaking tradition five and

six, I should stop going. We have an off skew primary purpose and we endorse other 12-step literature and in effect other 12-step programs.” In reality, this meeting is one of the most important meetings I go to each week, and my main gripe is that it meets at 7am. Like the steps, the traditions are suggestions. In the case of the traditions, as we hear, they’re in place to keep groups together. Well, this group has been running for ten or more years, and has helped and continues to help many alcoholics. So, whatever they’re doing is working, regardless of tradition six.

## **Tradition Six**

*by Barbara E, Portland, OR*

When I was brand-new in Maryland/DC AA, I heard Henry the Plumber say that we alcoholics tended to be “impulsive, compulsive, and sometimes repulsive.” To this, Bill W. added in the 12x12’s Tradition 6, “bankrupt idealists (p.156),” based on his and pioneers’ observations of meetings around the country.

By then—1945—he and the New York City’s office staffers had received mountains of letters about why meetings either “die or fly.” Too, research had been done about why the Washington Society, started in May 1840 by six sober alcoholics in Baltimore, gained nearly a million members around the country before dying in 1848. They strayed from their “singleness of purpose” into the hot “public controversy of abolition.” His experiences in early AA meetings and all those letters from 1935 to the early 1940s obviously galvanized him to write the Traditions portion of the “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions” to tell us what worked and what didn’t.

As an Old Timer, a group secretary many times over, and as a meeting starter back in the ‘80s and ‘90s in Portland (West Linn, Lake Oswego Women’s Acceptance, 4th Dimension, 5:30 Meditation) and in Maryland in the early 1970s, I’m among those sticklers following Bill’s experience and practical words in Tradition 6. You don’t have to be an Old Timer to know what happens when a meeting begins to stray from its singleness of purpose to “stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.” Thank goodness this is read at most meetings’ start as the Preamble or the program would have gone the way of the Washingtonians.

The temptation to drift from the singleness of purpose is usually couched in variations of “we need to keep up with the times.” But we have a timeless disease, first described 5,000 years ago when Noah, after the flood, lay drunk in his tent defying disapproving eyes of his family (Genesis, 9:20-25). Or that sailor describing a hangover we recognize so well (Proverbs, 23: 29-35).

The program would not have celebrated 82 years earlier this month if “sticklers”, whether newbie or OT, hadn’t gently or otherwise reminded the grow-with-the-times folk at the tables, business meetings, or assemblies that Bill knew wherein he spoke about straying from that singleness of purpose because outside values from our past was to govern the inside of AA. Given our “characteristics” before—and often after sobriety—and graphic and familiar examples of promotion instead of attraction, it means awareness, awareness, awareness. The danger zones are timeless: using AA for moneymaking, buying property, or prestige by “big-shot-ism” and either endorsing or permitting other entities, such as distilleries, to use AA as an endorsement.

Too often these actions are inspired by super-enthusiasm for the program, the desire to be influential in the outside world, or unregenerate do-gooders. Bill nails the common ones attempting to use the AA name—and with a wry sense of humor about what doesn't “fly” for long if we are involved:

- Starting rehabilitation centers
- Starting a hospital chain for alcoholics
- Starting alcohol-related educational programs
- Starting sobriety-related enterprises
- Trying to educate the court systems
- Starting mental-health facilities
- Trying to clean up politics
- Trying to be a liaison between religion and medicine
- Agitating for legal reform on alcoholism

Most of us can cite examples of the money-property-prestige shortcoming that eventually kills a meeting. Or loudly justifying the stray then leading to decay of a meeting.

I remember one having to do with taking money from outside sources.

At a fairly new downtown meeting, a reporter showed up with a sizable cheque from part of a national prize for a story about Portland AA. My AA buddy Joe and I instantly invoked Tradition 6 about money “diverting us from our primary purpose,” and Tradition 7 about “declining outside contributions.” She shot back that she knew “all about AA” in researching that story. We knew her gift was from guilt about making money off the program. Shockingly, the treasurer who had long-time abstinence but new AA, accepted the money. As Joe muttered, “this meeting won't last long.” He was right.

And so once again, Bill knew wherein he spoke when writing Tradition 6—and Tradition 7.

We must do the same because a meeting's survival and ours depends on speaking up that those Traditions are being broken. It can be done at the tables, business meetings, assemblies, out in the parking lot or on the phone. Or when asked to read the Traditions, giving special emphasis to Tradition 6.

## **RELAPSE: HOW TO PREVENT IT... PART THREE: HOW TO SURVIVE THE NEW AA**

*by Luke F. from Portland, OR*

Did you know that most of the work in AA is handled by people in their first 5 years, with a heavy number in their first 3 years? If we have always had one significant problem in our journey through the decades since 1935 it would be DRIFTING. We put a lot of emphasis on time, as we should, but making heroes out of people can actually contribute to their relapse. I have known people with time who have gotten in trouble because they couldn't live up to their own perceived wonderful-ness. Old Timers in AA get in trouble too, and if their Ivory Tower is

too high and formidable, it is also isolated.

I am amused by the attention, sometimes, when at 45 years, someone who doesn't even know me is awe-struck by my "time". Please, don't be. While I am very grateful for all those years, I am always the first one to remember that the years and decades of a wonderful life has only been possible because I have learned through bitter lessons that famous Rule 62 we AA's know, and try not to take myself too seriously, and that it is only a relationship with a Higher Power that has kept me sober and genuinely happy most of the time. Something which was NOT the case when I was drinking.

I attribute much of my early success (especially that first difficult year) to the abundant twelve step work which was available before the advent of modern treatment. I didn't do much sponsoring back then mainly because I was rarely asked, but I was constantly--due to 12 Step calls--surrounded by New members who, as now, rarely stayed sober. It's hard to convince someone how important it is NOT to get bitter or resentful when, after working with someone, they either vanish into drinking and addiction, or they drift away and refuse your help, feeling that the process of getting sober did not include any work devoted to STAYING sober. If those folk I simply call them occasionally, for up to a year or so, and just maintain a friendship and don't even discuss sobriety unless they bring it up. I don't want to be a nuisance and I will usually stay in touch unless asked not to.

I remain active and plan my life around AA and not the other way around. My involvement includes at least four meetings a week, teaching a class at DePaul which is not really a 12 Step Meeting but rather a forum where we can get into discussing in depth where people are with the Steps, when relapse has often discouraged them from even returning to the Program.

I have a Home Group which is a real In-Your-Face Cross Talk meeting where the chairperson that day tells his story and is given feedback regarding his program from a large group of men. It is encouraged to be loving and tolerant, usually but not always successfully, but the growth by the men who attend regularly is among the best I have seen in modern AA. All of the important parts of the Program -- Step Work, Sponsorship, Meeting attendance and working with others -- is stressed. It is a wonderful way for a new person to find his way through the mine field of early recovery.

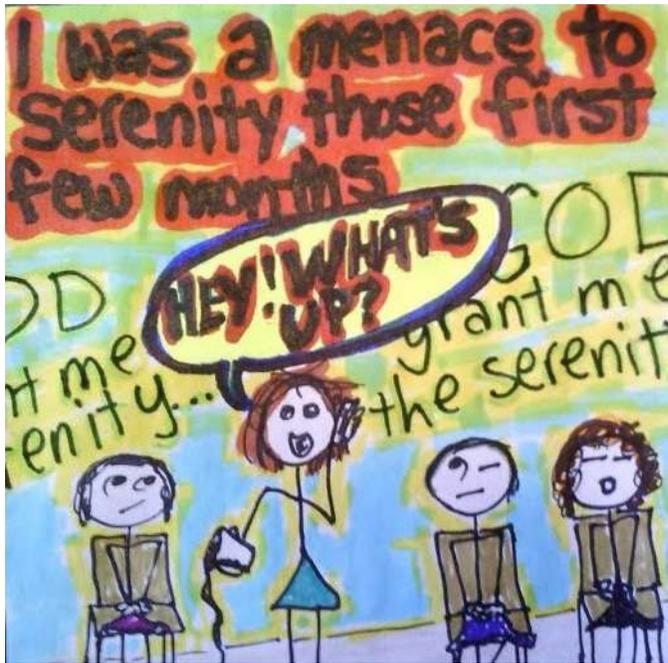
When Bill and Bob began this journey 82 years ago, they had no idea what to do or how to do it. Much was learned by making mistakes and the personalities which dominated then and caused problems and solved problems and created a world of safety and challenge to those troubled souls is alive and well in our meeting rooms throughout the world. We have become the Mother/Father role model for hundreds of variations of the same Peer Counseling concept which launched Bill's dream onto the world.

I've been around and sober half the time AA has been on the planet and yes, the AA world of my youth is gone and unlikely to return in THAT form. Many of the Oldtimers of my lifetime didn't approve of the way the Program was changing and found the trajectory too different for their tastes. More's the pity because AA will always change or it will cease to be. It is alive with promise and often when I am listening to the newer members of that crazy Home Group of mine, I become emotional listening to their struggles, and often feel their growth pains. I have begun to recognize the obstacles that seems to come at certain points in a person's sobriety, like Panicky New Person, Know-It-All-Book-Thumper, Bleeding Deacon, Seriously Introspective Lifer--and on and on throughout the years. I no longer know where I am personally these days myself. But I

have become hooked on the journey and the wonder. My emotion often bubbles to the surface without any need to care about what others think. If I cry it is never out of sadness, only joy. I connected with my brothers and sisters, found a life, and have been given gifts beyond calculation. I know you will all find it too!

## Art

by Kari F, Portland, OR



## Monthly Business Meetings

For details about monthly business meetings, contact the PAI Office at 503-223-8569. Or send your questions or concerns to: [1212@pdxaa.org](mailto:1212@pdxaa.org)

**Portland Area Intergroup (PAI):** Business Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month, 7:00 PM, 4524 SE Stark St. (Unity of Portland), Portland.

**Portland Deaf Access Committee:** Monthly, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month, 6:30, The Alano Club, NW 24th & Kearney.

**Dist 9:** 1<sup>st</sup> Wed, 6:30 PM, 24<sup>th</sup> and Kearney, Portland

**Dist 10:** Last Mon, 7:00 PM, 12945 Beaverdam Rd., West Side Service Cntr, Beaverton

**Dist 11:** Last Thu, 7:00 PM, "URS" Club, Portland

**Dist 12:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tue, 6:30 PM, 12x12 Club, 7035 NE Glisan, Portland

**Dist 15:** 1<sup>st</sup> Wed, 6:45 PM, 710 6<sup>th</sup> St., Oregon City

**Dist 18:** 1<sup>st</sup> Sat, 9:30 AM, 215 N 6<sup>th</sup> St., St. Helens

**Dist 23:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tue, 6:00 PM, Emmanuel Presbyterian, 19200 SW Willamette Dr., West Linn

**Dist 24:** 1<sup>st</sup> Thu, 6:00 PM, 5441 SE Belmont St., Portland

**Dist 25:** 4<sup>th</sup> Tue, 5:30 PM, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 39901 Pleasant Street, Sandy, OR

**Dist 26:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Sun, 5:00 PM, St Charles Church, 5310 NE 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Portland

**Dist 27:** 1<sup>st</sup> Mon, 7:00 PM, 11631 SE Linwood Ave., St. Paul's Methodist, Milwaukie  
**Dist 31:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Tue, 7:00 PM, 937 NE Jackson School Rd., Hillsboro  
**Dist 34:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat, 5:00 PM, 485 Portland Ave., Gladstone  
**Dist 35:** 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sat, 7:00 PM, 18926 SW Shaw St., Suite A, Beaverton  
**Dist 36:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thu, 6:00 PM, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St, Portland  
**Dist 37:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Tue, 7:00 PM, Sherwood Community Center, 21907 SW Sherwood Blvd., Sherwood

## Committee News

**We have several committee positions available. Portland Area Intergroup needs your help.** Working on a committee is excellent 12th Step service work. If you are interested in being on any Portland Area Intergroup committee, send an email to [pdxaa.org](mailto:pdxaa.org) with "COMMITTEE INTEREST" in the subject field. Or, just click on **Service** on the Intergroup website. **Intergroup committees carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.** Please help yourself and others. Sign up. Thank you.

**Bridging the Gap (BTG):** Provides a one-time temporary contact for people transitioning from a treatment center to AA meetings. BTG meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Portland Intergroup Office basement, located at 825 NE 20th Ave, Suite 200, Portland. "We Bridge the Gap so alcoholics leaving treatment don't have to walk alone across that scary gap between the beginning of recovery in treatment and the continued recovery in AA." Please contact the PAI office via phone, 503-223-8569, or email [1212@pdxaa.org](mailto:1212@pdxaa.org), if you are interested.

**AA Hotline:** The AA Hotline keeps the Portland phone number for AA active 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The way this is accomplished is by volunteer support. Calls to the AA number placed after Central Office hours and redirected to volunteers' phones, keeping the volunteer's number anonymous. A volunteer can elect to go on a 12th Step call or just provide the information the caller needs about meetings. Commitments are generally two times a month. In particular, if you're a night-owl, we'd really appreciate your help. Call the Central Office for more information at 503-223-8569.

**Newsletter (*Sobriety in Stumptown*):** The committee for the very publication you are now reading is looking for members. Send an email of interest to: [newsletter@pdxaa.org](mailto:newsletter@pdxaa.org)

**Events:** The Events Committee needs committee members. Send an email to [Events@pdxaa.org](mailto:Events@pdxaa.org) for more information.

## Get Published!

If you have AA news, a meeting change, a big event, a story, a painting, a poem, or just a rant, Sobriety in Stumptown wants to hear it! Send articles of 1000 words or fewer to:

[newsletter@pdxaa.org](mailto:newsletter@pdxaa.org)

Deadline for the July issue: July 1st.

## Step Six

*"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."*

## Tradition Six

*"An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or*

*outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”*

**Serenity Prayer**

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

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