

A.A. Tourism: Visiting Recovery's Historic Sites

WHEN I FIRST GOT SOBER, I WAS HESITANT TO TRAVEL TOO far. I lived in an extremely isolated place of immense natural beauty; there just didn't seem to be any need to go anywhere else. And, quite simply, I was reluctant to miss my meetings and leave my new A.A. friends and routines behind.

But even recovering alcoholics *must* travel sooner or later. My first trip was to accept an award across the state. A.A.s urged me to seek out meetings while I would be away. They promised that I would be safe if I kept "near" our program.

It never occurred to me that I could also visit the numerous historic sites where A.A. had struggled and flowered. Now comes a comprehensive Website lovingly compiled by Archie M., Bill L., and Nancy O. of the West Baltimore Group of Alcoholics Anonymous from A.A. literature. They list more than 150 places where A.A. history was made.

You can view the complete list at <http://www.a-1associates.com/AA/places.htm>. Unfortunately, Archie, Bill, and Nancy do not cluster the locations by city, state, or region for travelers. (They do list their sites alphabetically and by street address). Here are 17 of the more interesting destinations to be found in Archie, Bill, and Nancy's monumental compilation:

¶ 182 Clinton Street, New York City: Bill Wilson and Lois lived here beginning in 1930. In November 1934, sitting in his kitchen with Ebby, Bill realized, as he wrote later, "that his whole deportment shouts at the new prospect that he is a man with a real answer." (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* at 160) (*Pass It On* at 87, 98, and 197);



**Dr. Bob's house at 855
Ardmore Avenue in Akron.**

¶ 855 Ardmore Avenue, Akron: Dr. Bob's home (*Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers* at 29) (*Pass It On* at 151);

¶ Ballyhane, Ireland: Sister Ignatia's birthplace (*Darrah: Sister Ignatia*, at 42);

¶ Blythewood Sanitarium, Greenwich, Ct.: Marty M., the first woman to achieve lasting sobriety was introduced here to our program by Dr. Harry Tiebout (Thomsen: *Bill W.*, at 302) (*The Language of the Heart* at 369) (*Pass It On* at 210-211);

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Sobriety Variety Pages



Adapted from Michelangelo (1475-1564): Crearea lui Adam, Capela Sixtina, 1512.

Sponsorship: Coming 'Round the Bend

IN MY 12 YEARS OF SOBRIETY IN A.A., NOTHING HAS **been as hard as sponsorship.** Even quitting drinking had its immediate benefits — no hangovers and, for a bragger like me, bragging rights. Making amends, while terrifying, gave me an inkling of what “strength” might mean. I guess it’s because sponsorship isn’t so much a matter of “my rights,” “my feelings,” but about somebody else, putting them first. What an order!

Before I became a sponsor, I was a sponsee. Jenny R. and I looked pretty different from the outside: different races, different socio-economic backgrounds. But I realized that Jenny had what I wanted: solid sobriety, a well ordered household, a child, and most of all a real warmth of feeling for the still suffering alcoholic, namely me. The day I did my first Fifth Step in her kitchen was one of the very happiest in my recovery. I left her house walking on air, and completely sure that the A.A. program was working for me.

I moved to another city, missed my A.A. friends back home, was trying to feel a part of the program, struggling to find a job and make friends. I talked about all this in a meeting and a lady with a southern drawl and a sunlight smile remarked, “I sometimes get full of self pity, too.” Here was someone who’d be honest with me. So I asked Lillian to be my sponsor. Her constant message was gratitude for sobriety, something that she — through many hardships — still never fails to talk about.

When I moved to Austin, I chose Mary Alice as a sponsor because she too had what I wanted. She was smart and dignified and funny, and she was an activist, committed to a better world. Our A.A. birthdays were both in late August, ten years apart. We used to laugh about this Hellish season of our surren-

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Sponsorship: Coming 'Round the Bend

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der. The last time I saw her, she read me a poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti about the Delphic Oracle.

Great Oracle, sleeping through the centuries,
Awaken now at last
And tell us how to save us from ourselves.

Mary Alice died just before her sixtieth birthday in 2004.

My record as a sponsor is checkered. Initially I got the *Big Book* preposition wrong. I read working with others as working on others and went about anxiously trying to set everybody straight, to make everyone happy. Over time I've seen that my motives were pretty bad. I wanted these whiny sponsees to hurry up and get better, so I wouldn't have to listen to their problems anymore and could pride myself on their sobriety too — more bragging rights. Again, all about *moi*.

One afternoon, trying to prep for a Fifth Step (someone else's), it occurred to me that I was taking on too much. God would be there too. I'm not to be God's agent in a Fifth Step, just "another human being." Could I handle that? I wrote down three words, "compassion, honesty, humility." My part was to put my sponsee's well being first, to be courageous (as Lillian had been) and not worry so much if my sponsee liked me, and most important to know that I was not in charge of her feelings or decisions. I could turn her, as myself, over to a Higher Power and know all would be well.

I believe that A.A. teaches us to be free, not dependent on a sponsor or any other person. As Jenny always says, "We carry the message, not the drunk." As soon as I get on a soap box or start giving advice (which I sometimes still "slip" and do) I'm not practicing the A.A. program. I'm just an alcoholic. All I can truthfully impart is my own experience. When my A.A. friends (I prefer this phrase to sponsees) do things that seem odd or wrong to me, I come around the bend and begin practicing Step One. I'm powerless over them. Sometimes I call Jenny, who lives several states away but is still my sponsor; she is always there to help me.

And when I screw up, which is often, I make amends if necessary, and then I try to lighten up. I remember what Mary Alice told me about sponsorship: "You don't have to do it well, you just have to do it."

—Anonymous

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For meeting
information go to
austinaa.org

To submit articles,
letters, or news for
publication, use
[mailto:austinaa@
austin.rr.com](mailto:austinaa@austin.rr.com)

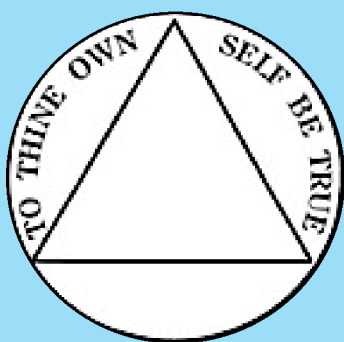
Hill Country Intergroup
wishes to thank all who
give so much of their
time, effort, and personal
resources that the vital
services we offer
continue and grow.

Hill Country Intergroup Birthday Club

Members for September

John B.
Turning Point Group

Sam C.
Lost Pines Group
(Bastrop)



La Importancia del Anonimato

TRADICIONALMENTE, LOS MIEMBROS DE A.A. SIEMPRE han cuidado de mantener su anonimato a nivel público: ante la prensa, la radio, la televisión y el cine. En los primeros días de A.A., cuando la palabra "alcohólico" llevaba un estigma más grande que hoy, era fácil entender esta desgana de identificarse — y de hacerse publicidad.

A medida que iba creciendo la Comunidad de A.A., pronto se hicieron evidentes los valores positivos del anonimato.

Primero, sabemos por experiencia que muchos bebedores problema vacilarían en recurrir a A.A. si creyeran que su problema sería un asunto de discusión pública, aun si fuera por inadvertencia. Los principiantes deben tener la posibilidad de buscar ayuda con seguridad de que no se revele su identidad a nadie fuera de la Comunidad.

Además, creemos que el concepto del anonimato personal también tienen una significación personal para nosotros que contribuye a refrenar los impulsos de reconocimiento personal, y de poder, prestigio y riqueza que han provocado dificultades para otras sociedades. Nuestra eficacia relativa en trabajar con los alcohólicos podría verse perjudicada en alto grado si buscáramos o aceptáramos el reconocimiento público.

Aunque todo miembro de A.A. tienen perfecta libertad de interpretar la tradición de A.A. según le parezca, no se reconoce a ningún miembro individual como portavoz de la Comunidad a nivel local, nacional o internacional. Cada miembro habla únicamente por sí mismo.

A.A. tiene un deuda de gratitud con todos los medios de comunicación por lo que han contribuido a lo largo de los años a reforzar la Tradición de anonimato. De vez en cuando la Oficina de Servicios Generales se pone en contacto con todos los medios de comunicación principales de los Estados Unidos y Canadá, para describirles la Tradición y pedirles que cooperen en asegurar que se cumpla.

Por diversas razones, un miembro de A.A. puede "romper su anonimato" deliberadamente ante el público. Ya que es un asunto de elección y conciencia personales, obviamente, la Comunidad como totalidad no tiene ningún control sobre tales desviaciones de la tradición. No obstante, queda bien claro que los miembros que lo hacen no tienen la aprobación de la mayoría abrumadora de sus compañeros de A.A.

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September Volunteers at Intergroup — Office: Roland P., Scott B., Monica, Leslie Anne D., Craig W., John B., "Pete" (The Guy), Herb, Ned, Gene C., Morna N., Gene, Jim H., Jorge V., Lynn W., Kirk N., Robert G., Marty C., John, and Matt. **Hotline:** Keith F., Linda F., Chris S., Paul W. and Beth B., Connie and Mike, Tom K., Jeff P., Janna, Ruben G., Suzannah, Janet F., Tommy B., Karen M., Bill U., Gordon K., Cory, Tonya B-R, Carol M., David K., Julie A., Jim E., Randy R., Stewart G., Deb J., BOSCO, Dennis and Deanie, Jeff P., Jenny P., Jerry T., Gayle B., Betsy F., Cherie G., Deborah P., Morna N., Dan and Kathy, Paul B., and Tammy D.

Why A.A. Can't Help Addicts—Nor They Us

THIS HEADLINE, INCIDENTALLY, ENUNCIATES A TENET OF Narcotics Anonymous, too: "Alcoholism is too limited a term for us; our problem is not a specific substance, it is a disease called addiction." From *Narcotics Anonymous*, Fifth Edition

It is misleading to ... give the impression that Alcoholics Anonymous solves other problems or knows what to do about addiction to drugs. From the pamphlet *The A.A. Group*

Our first duty, as a society, is to insure our own survival. Therefore we have to avoid distractions and multipurpose activity. An A.A. group, as such, cannot take on all the personal problems of its members. Sobriety — freedom from alcohol — through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the *sole* purpose of an A.A. group.

We have to confine our membership to *alcoholics*, and we have to confine our A.A. groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help *anyone*.

From the pamphlet *Problems Other Than Alcohol*

At <http://aabbsg.de/oppf/oppf0309.htm>, Angel S. recounts this conversation with a self-identified addict visiting an open A.A. meeting in West Hollywood:

ANGEL: Do you go to Narcotics Anonymous?

VISITOR: Oh no, I don't like it. I go to A.A. meetings.

A: You're an addict. How do you identify?

V: By Tradition Three. I say I have a desire not to drink and then I can share.

A: Tradition Three says that our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Alcoholism is an allergy of the body, obsession of the mind, caused by ingesting beverage alcohol and being hypersensitive to it. Did you ever drink?

V: Oh no, I've *never* had a drink. I'm a prescription medication addict.

A: Do you realize that [by] going to A.A., you're lying to yourself to fit in and lying to the group ...?

V: I hadn't thought of it that way.

A: Don't you think you would be better-served to get the identification you need to recover among fellow [pill] addicts?

V: No, I like A.A.

September Donations From Area A.A. Groups:

Jonestown: \$240; Bridge to Shore: \$640; Four Points: \$42; Stoney Point: \$48; Dripping Springs: \$240; Allandale: \$40; Into Action (Lockhart): \$30; New Beginnings: \$48; Seniors: \$27; Northland: \$797; NA24: \$50; Keep First Things First: \$243; Hope: \$106; Unity of the Hills: \$111 ; Burnet Nooners: \$300; Central: \$71; Friday Rush Hour: \$60; and Lost Pines: \$141.
Total: \$3,234

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Join the Hill Country Intergroup Birthday Club

Send this information accompanied by the suggested donation of \$1 for each year of sobriety to Intergroup at 1339 Lamar Square Drive, Austin 78704

Name _____

Address _____

Sobriety date _____

Year _____

Home Group _____

Donor (if a gift) _____

All donations go to Intergroup services. You will receive a Clubmember card and be listed opposite in your birthday month.

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¶ Calvary Church: Dr. Sam Shoemaker's church at Fourth Avenue and East Twenty-first Street in New York City was the Oxford Group's headquarters in the United States (Kurtz: *Not-God*, at 18) (*Pass It On* at 116) (Pittman: *A.A., The Way It Began*, at 151);

¶ Charles B. Towns Hospital, 293 Central Park West, New York City: Bill was treated at this expensive drying-out facility four times in 1933 and 1934. Here it was that Bill first met Dr. William D. Silkworth (*Comes of Age* at 143) (Thomsen at 191) (Smith, Smith, and Brewer: *Children of the Healer*, at 4) (Wilson: *Lois Remembers*, at 85 and 145) (Kurtz at 14) (*Pass It On* at 99-100) (Pittman at 163);

¶ City Club, Akron: Dr. Bob would play bridge and hide out here when he was drunk (*Dr. Bob* at 33 and 112);

¶ East Dorset, Vt.: Bill's birthplace: It is also where he grew up and is buried (*Dr. Bob* at 12) (*Pass It On* at 13 and 407);

¶ Gatehouse on the Seiberling Estate, Akron: Bill and Dr. Bob first



met here in May 1935 (Thomsen at 236) (Smith, Smith, and Brewer at 5) (Wing: *Grateful To Have Been There*, at 69) (Wilson at 95);

¶ Kessler's Donut Shop, Akron: gathering place for Akron A.A.s after those early meetings (*Dr. Bob* at 141 and 231);

The Gatehouse at the Seiberling Estate in Akron, Ohio, where Bill and Bob first met.

¶ West Side Jail, New York City: Bill was locked up here following a night of drunken carousing (Wilson at 75);

¶ Mayflower Hotel, South Main Street, Akron: It was from this grand old hotel that Bill placed his desperate call to Rev. Walter F. Tunks, a local Episcopal minister, in May of 1935 when he realized that helping drunks had kept him sober in New York and might work when he was tempted while traveling (*Comes of Age* at 65) (Smith, Smith, and Brewer at 4-5) (*Dr. Bob* at 56 and 63) (*Language of the Heart* at 355) (Wilson at 95) (Kurtz at 26-27) (*Pass It On* at 136) (Pittman at 127);

¶ Riverside Drive and 120th Street, New York City: This has been the address of the General Service Office since 1995 (*A.A. Everywhere Anywhere* at 21);

¶ San Antonio: Nell Wing, Bill's Texas-born secretary, taught at a high school for Mexican and Mexican-American children in this city when she was starting out (Wing at 6);

¶ St. Thomas Hospital, Akron: Dr. Bob met Sister Ignatia here in 1928 and together they began treating alcoholics in August of 1939. St. Thomas was first to adopt a policy recognizing the right of alcoholics to receive treatment combining medicine and A.A. (*Comes of Age* at 7,

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9, 143, and 206) (*Dr. Bob* at 15, 45, and 348) (*Everywhere Anywhere* at 15) (*Language of the Heart* at 156, 203, and 336) (*Service Manual* at 16) (Darrah at 6, 7 and 87);

¶ Union Club, Park Avenue, New York City: Private club where John D. Rockefeller hosted a dinner to honor A.A. in 1940 (*Comes of Age* at 182) (Thomsen at 294-295) (*Everywhere Anywhere* at 15) (*Language of the Heart* at 145) (Wilson at 128) (Kurtz at 93) (*Pass It On* at 232); and



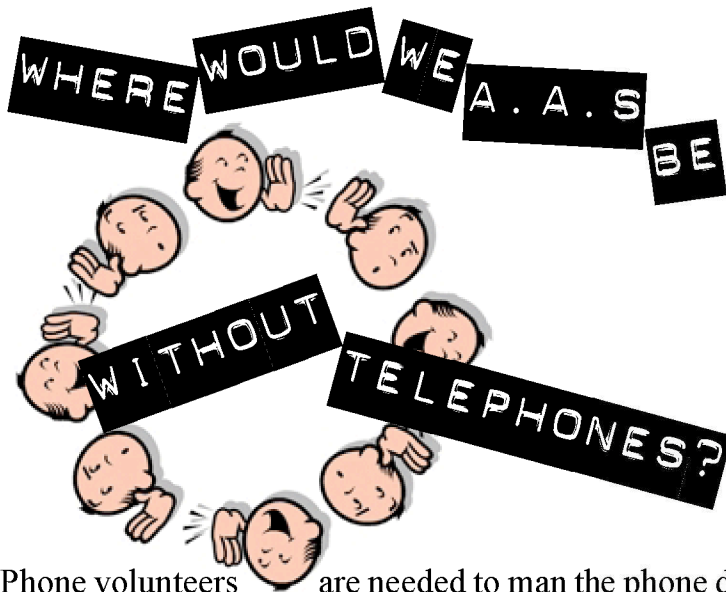
¶ Winchester Cathedral, Winchester, England (its location in this ancient town is shown at left): During military service in World War One, Bill realized he needed God in his life while

visiting this great church (Wilson at 25) (*Pass It On* at 60).

— Evan W., *Cat Mountain*

The Tradition for October is the Tenth:

Alcoholic Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.



Phone volunteers are needed to man the phone desk at Intergroup, refer callers to the Twelfth Step call list, and take phone calls at home for the answering service. All positions require a minimum of six months of continuous sobriety and that you have taken all of A.A.'s 12 steps, be familiar with Chapter Seven of the Big Book, and be willing to commit for a year. If you're interested in these opportunities for service, grab a phone and call Clint Ritter at Intergroup: 512-444-0071.

Meetings at Intergroup

First Monday at 7 p.m.:

Treatment Facilities
Committee and Correctional
Facilities Committee

Second Monday at 6:30
p.m.:
Intergroup Representatives

Second Saturday at 2 p.m.:
Grapevine Committee

Third Thursday at 6:30 p.m.:
Board of Trustees

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. 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. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.



Alcohólicos Anónimos es una comunidad de hombres y mujeres que comparten su mutua experiencia, fortaleza y esperanza para resolver su problema común y ayudar a otros a recuperarse del alcoholismo. El único requisito para ser miembro de A.A. es el deseo de dejar la bebida.

Para ser miembro de A.A. no se pagan honorarios ni cuotas; nos mantenemos con nuestras propias contribuciones. A.A. no está afiliada a ninguna secta, religión, partido político, organización o institución alguna; no desea intervenir en controversias; no respalda ni se opone a ninguna causa. Nuestro objetivo primordial es mantenernos sobrios y ayudar a otros alcohólicos a alcanzar el estado de sobriedad.

Area Group Histories: Third in a Series



Unity of the Hills meets at nine a.m. on Saturdays just inside this door of the Education Wing of Unity Church of the Hills, about 3/10-of-a-mile west of Interstate 183 at 9905 Anderson Mill Road.

Three Goals Dictated New Meeting Format

LIKE MOST GROUPS, UNITY OF THE HILLS WAS started in March 2003 by a small group of A.A. members with a desire to stay sober — and a coffee pot. There were several things these founding members wanted to bring to their new meeting; for example: it was important that there be a focus on solutions.

But we likewise did not want the meeting to get overwhelmed by too much reading. We decided to make ours a step meeting based upon the *Twelve and Twelve*, but with no more than five minutes of reading from the book.

One member got sober in New York City where people share their experience, strength, and hope during the first half of meetings. This is followed by an open discussion for the remaining 30 to 35 minutes. This member suggested we try this approach in Austin because he had been able to identify with the speakers and was usually reminded that he is in the right place.

Perhaps most important, this format reminded him that virtually everyone in A.A. has something helpful to say and important insights to offer.

Our meeting has grown steadily since — in the beginning we had five to six regulars. Today we see 20 to 30 people each week. We believe this growth is due to the wonderful fellowship we share — but it probably also doesn't hurt that we serve Starbucks coffee!

— Keith F., *Unity of the Hills*