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AL-ANON'S 60TH
ANNIVERSARY

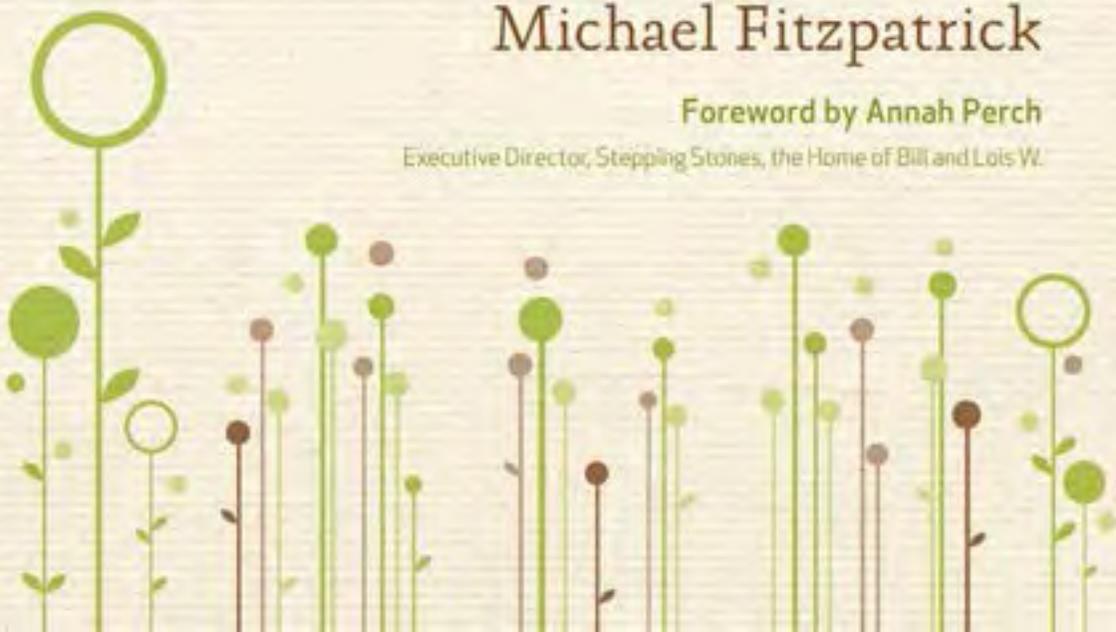
We Recovered Too

THE FAMILY GROUPS'
BEGINNINGS in the
PIONEERS' OWN WORDS

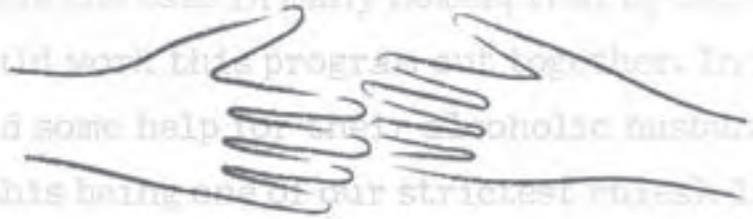
Michael Fitzpatrick

Foreword by Annah Perch

Executive Director, Stepping Stones, the Home of Bill and Lois W.



We Recovered Too



HAZELDEN®

We Recovered Too

The Family Groups' Beginnings
in the Pioneers' Own Words

.....

Hazelden Celebrates

Al-Anon's 60th Anniversary

.....

MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

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Center City, Minnesota 55012
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EDITOR'S NOTE

In keeping with the Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions of Alcoholic Anonymous and Al-Anon, first names with initials for last names are used for people in both memberships.

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Legacy 12

Bringing AA and Twelve Step History Alive

Hazelden's *Legacy 12* publishing initiative enriches people's recovery with dynamic multimedia works that use rare original-source documents to bring Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Step history alive.

This book is dedicated to the three most important women in my life:

- *My mother, Mary, for her prayers, her love, and her example.*
- *My daughter, Emily, with her contagious smile and positive attitude.*
- *My wife, Joy, without whom none of this would happen—she makes it all worth it.*

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Foreword

IT'S BEEN SIXTY YEARS since Lois W. and Anne B. wrote the first Al-Anon–related letters in the library of Stepping Stones, Bill and Lois Wilson's historic home in Bedford Hills, New York. Today, loved ones who suffer the effects of alcoholism on the family can find hope through Al-Anon Family Groups. Lois started the Stepping Stones Foundation in 1979 to make the history of AA and Al-Anon available. In this book, Mike Fitzpatrick honors Lois's intentions with respect and dignity. It has been my sincere pleasure to offer the Stepping Stones Archives to help him tell these stories. It is a tribute to Mike's diligence that the information in this book from the Stepping Stones Archives is appearing in print for the first time ever.

Stepping Stones keeps and preserves the historic records of Bill and Lois W., respective cofounders of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups. The Stepping Stones Archives show that Lois began to practice the principles of AA in her life as a family member in 1936. By 1951, she was happy working in the garden, being a homemaker, and helping drunks and their families. Bill's persistence helped Lois to see that family members needed a clearinghouse similar to AA. Bill convinced Lois that she was the person to take on the challenge. Lois went on to dedicate her life to enthusiastically nurturing the movement.

Of course, hundreds of women and men worked alongside Lois in her endeavor. This book introduces us to a few of them. Lois's relationship with the first recovering family member she ever met, Anne S., is finally discussed in these pages. A talk to the Family

Groups by Bill W., which demonstrates his influence on Al-Anon, is also included (see chapter 8). In my opinion, this is one of Bill's most eloquent talks.

Some of the most meaningful experiences I've had at Stepping Stones have been the hours spent with Mike, pondering connections between historic figures, determining how best to make the words of Bill, Lois, and others available, and reveling in what the past means in the present. While Stepping Stones commemorates the achievements specifically of Bill and Lois in the field of recovery from alcoholism, this book commemorates the achievements of all the key people in the Family Group recovery movement. Without Anne S., Margaret D., Pearl E., Bertha M., and the others portrayed here, hope for recovery for alcoholics and their families might not be as possible as it is today.

Lois W. believed that Al-Anon would be equal to, if not rival, AA in membership and effectiveness. Yet many loved ones of alcoholics continue to suffer. Books such as this will help more family members find and celebrate recovery, while also informing and inspiring many other readers. The language of suffering and hope is universal.

With this work, Mike Fitzpatrick has proven to be a faithful friend to Stepping Stones and the recovery community. His respect for the founders and pioneers of the Family Group movement is reflected in his commitment to letting them tell their stories, as much as possible, in their own words. I thank him for preserving this valuable history and sharing it with the world.

Annah Perch
Executive Director
Stepping Stones, the historic home of Bill and Lois W.

Preface

IN THE BOOK *ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS*, Bill W. wrote, “Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us.”¹ As baffling as alcohol is to the alcoholic, the effects and destructiveness of alcoholism on non-alcoholic family members are equally or possibly even more baffling.

Over the past sixty years, Al-Anon Family Groups has grown into a worldwide fellowship with groups in 133 countries outside the United States and Canada. Including Alateen, the groups number more than 25,000 worldwide, and Al-Anon literature is available in forty languages. The groups have had a positive impact on the lives of countless thousands of people suffering from the devastation of alcoholism.

When it was suggested that I do something related to Al-Anon’s history in celebration of Al-Anon Family Groups sixtieth anniversary, I was honored and excited to be able to use resources I already had at hand for such a project. In 2005, I acquired the audio library that originally belonged to Arbutus O., one of Al-Anon’s pioneering members. She and her husband, Bill, lived in Texas. They began recording AA and Al-Anon conferences and events in the early fifties. They were also able to locate recordings and other memorabilia from founding members dating back to the late 1940s. Together, these materials comprise the Midwest Tape Library, now in my possession.

Arbutus had only one condition or request when I was preparing over three thousand reel-to-reel tapes for the journey to my home in Arizona. She asked that I make the recordings available for

the next generation of AA and Al-Anon members. Since that time, I have dedicated hundreds of hours and a great many personal resources to having the audio library digitized, and I have set up a website to make the recordings available as they become ready. (To learn more, visit the website www.recoveryspeakers.org.) In addition to the thousands of audio recordings, I also have hundreds of historical documents. These letters, journals, and other text sources are known as the Fitzpatrick Archive. Therefore, in this book's Notes section, most citations refer to these three sources—the Midwest Tape Library, the Fitzpatrick Archive, and www.recoveryspeakers.org, also known as the Recovery Speakers Library.

I began to think about the best way to use the audio recordings and other archives in my possession to honor both Arbutus's request and Al-Anon's anniversary. The biggest challenge was deciding what material to use and what not to use. I didn't want to tell the same story that had been told in other publications; however, the reality is, there's really only one history to tell.

Consequently, I decided to tell the story in a way that had never been done before—I decided to select recordings of several Al-Anon pioneers and the cofounders and let them tell the Al-Anon story "in their own words." This would give me the opportunity to use some rare recordings of the early days of the Family Groups as content for both a book and an audio CD. For example, I have a recording made at the First AA International Convention held in 1950, where the "wives' group" from Toronto was invited to share at a session. I've included transcriptions of their talks in the chapter entitled "Sound Homes." Another transcription is from a record album of Bill Wilson talking to a wives' group in Salt Lake City. Both of these historical talks had been stored away, unreleased for many years.

In addition to the audio recordings, I wanted to include some of the documents found in the many boxes of archives I received from Arbutus as well as other interesting pieces I'd picked up along the way. These archives are comprised of old letters, memos, typed speeches, and notebooks. One thing I was particularly excited about sharing was a letter written by Al-Anon pioneer Myrtle L. about the

time she visited with Henrietta D., the wife of AA number three, Bill D. Henrietta's candid recollections of the early days of AA and those early wives' meetings with Anne S. are remarkable.

When I began writing, I immediately knew that any historical look at Al-Anon couldn't just begin with its official organization in 1951 as "The Clearing House." The book had to include those very early days of Alcoholics Anonymous when the wives joined their husbands at AA meetings and then later began to meet separately to discuss their own problems. I felt it was necessary to show how Al-Anon was born out of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The first chapter, "855 Ardmore Avenue," tells the story of Anne S., the wife of AA's cofounder Dr. Bob. As you read on, you will meet many other people who share their part in the formation of the Family Groups. There is an entire chapter of historic *AA Grapevine* articles written by Family Group members both before and after Al-Anon began.

The book shows how individual family members (usually the wives of alcoholics) recognized that they, too, were suffering and needed a program for recovery. It also details some original versions of the Steps used by the wives' groups in overcoming their problems. These groups sprang up throughout the United States and Canada and eventually became what is known today as Al-Anon Family Groups.

The combination of audio transcriptions, rare articles, and documents allowed me to tell a fact-filled story of how Al-Anon got its start, as well as many of the early successes and challenges facing the organization. I tried to incorporate as much information as I could about the important characters involved in the founding of Al-Anon, including both cofounders. Thanks to the generosity of the Stepping Stones Archives, I was also able to include some never-before-published letters.

Throughout the book I attempted to limit my personal comments and to use the material available to create a work that delivers on the promise of telling this story "in their own words." Along with the stories of the founders, the last two chapters feature personal stories

of two current Al-Anon members. They tell how their lives changed as the result of Al-Anon Family Groups. It's interesting to note that the story of Al-Anon may at times sound a bit different when told by different people. I believe this occurs because each person has a unique perspective on the events based on personal experiences.

It was my goal from the beginning to adhere strictly to the Twelve Traditions of Al-Anon, and I have been very careful to protect the anonymity of individual members. I have always had deep respect for Al-Anon Family Groups and the members who have done so much for so many. Of course, Al-Anon World Service Office (WSO) does not endorse any literature that is not "Al-Anon conference approved" and the Traditions suggest that Al-Anon has no opinion on outside issues.

Accompanying the print edition of *We Recovered Too* is a CD that contains the voices from the transcriptions included in the text. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to include all of the recordings used in the research and writing of the book. However, the CD contains a representative selection from the talks used. An e-book is also available that contains audio clips from the transcriptions.

I hope you will find this work both informative and entertaining.

Acknowledgments

I AM VERY GRATEFUL to Sid Farrar for our many conversations that ultimately led to the writing of this book. When he shared that Hazelden wanted to recognize and celebrate Al-Anon's sixtieth anniversary with this publication, I was thrilled!

Since the actual writing of the book needed to be completed within a very short time to make its 2011 debut, I am most thankful to my family, who stood by me all the way. Their support was unwavering as I frantically dug through recordings and paperwork to shape this book.

I want to thank my friend, author William Borchert, for opening the door to Hazelden and this new career. He supplied lots of encouragement throughout the process of coauthoring *1000 Years of Sobriety*, my first writing effort. He has continued to offer his encouragement and support.

I also want to thank Aaron and Vannoy for their contributions. It is impossible for me to thank by name everyone who has supported and encouraged me in this effort. However, Howard P. and Tom I., two of my closest mentors, were always on call and had just the right thing to say when I needed lifting up.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks to Annah Perch and the Stepping Stones Board for allowing me access to their incredible archives. Without their cooperation this book would never have been written.

Guide to the Audio CD

The sixteen-track CD included with this book offers highlights from archival recordings of Al-Anon's early leaders: passages from speeches, interviews, and other sources. Over thirty hours of recordings were excerpted and adapted for inclusion in the book *We Recovered Too*. While the CD contains some of this audio, it does not parallel the book exactly and is not intended as a "listen-along" disk. Instead, it serves as a collection of personal accounts and reflections told in these visionaries' own words—stories that, together, capture the spirit of the Family Groups.

Audio Tracks

Total running time: approx. 78 minutes

1. Bob S. Jr., son of Dr. Bob & Anne S., recalls his mother in a recorded statement, 1975. (5:17)
2. Bill W. discusses his spiritual experience, radio interview, June 1956. (6:15)
3. Anne S. records a brief message to Lois and Bill W. on a wire recorder at her home in Akron, OH, June 29, 1947 (the only known record of her voice). (:53)
4. Myrtle L. discusses the early family groups, Twelfth Southeastern Regional AA Convention, Biloxi, MS, Aug. 24, 1956. (4:24)
5. Edith B. speaks on "Teamwork in the Home," First International Convention of AA, Cleveland, OH, July 29, 1950. (6:32)

6. Margaret D. tells her story, Fifth Al-Anon Rally, Detroit, MI, Feb. 23, 1964. (5:25)
7. Margaret D. describes alcoholism as a disease, Fifth Al-Anon Rally, Detroit, MI, Feb. 24, 1964. (1:49)
8. Margaret D. recalls her first Al-Anon meeting, Fifth Al-Anon Rally, Detroit, MI, Feb. 24, 1964. (5:15)
9. Margaret D. discusses the challenge of the Twelfth Step, Fifth Al-Anon Rally, Detroit, MI, Feb. 23, 1964. (4:46)
10. Lois W. speaks about her early days with Bill at the Twelfth Southeastern Regional AA Convention, Biloxi, MS, Aug. 24, 1956. (7:40)
11. Lois W. recounts the end of Bill's drinking, Twelfth Southeastern Regional AA Convention, Biloxi, MS, Aug. 24, 1956. (4:20)
12. Lois W. tells the shoe-throwing story, Twelfth Southeastern Regional AA Convention, Biloxi, MS, Aug. 24, 1956. (3:05)
13. Bill W.'s encouragement speech to a "wives' group" in Salt Lake City, UT, June 1951. (6:32)
14. Lois W. tells the "rowboat story" in a speech at a recovery event in Topeka, KS, Oct. 17, 1975. (6:48)
15. Lois W. recounts realizing that "I needed this for myself" in a speech at a recovery event in Topeka, KS, Oct. 17, 1975. (5:21)
16. Anne B. speaks at a DARR conference, a recovery event in Palm Springs, CA, June 4, 1983. (3:34)

Author's Note: Especially noteworthy are several tracks that recently resurfaced after being all but lost for many years. These include track 2, from an interview with Bill W.; track 4, the only known recording of Anne S.'s voice; track 5, a "wives' meeting" speech by Edith B., the wife of a Toronto AA member; tracks 10–12, from a speech by Al-Anon cofounder Lois W., and track 13, from a 1951 speech by Bill W.—a speech recorded and printed onto a record album once owned by Bill and Lois W and likely the only such copy.

Please also note that the CD includes some passages that do not appear in the book itself.



ONE

855 Ardmore Avenue: The Story of Anne S.

Bill W., the cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, referred to Anne S. as “the mother of our first group, Akron.”¹ As you read her story, you will learn of a woman who possessed a deep faith in God and unwavering love for those who suffer, much as a mother feels for her children. Her friends and family were always ready to tell people what her contributions were to the founding of both AA and the Al-Anon Family Groups. She was able to adapt simple, spiritual principles into her daily living and her giving. Many of her principles are reflected in the Twelve Steps, which had their beginnings in her home, 855 Ardmore Avenue, Akron, Ohio.

In two interviews, in 1975 and 2001, Bob Jr., the son of Dr. Bob and Anne, shared comments about his mother. The following account is adapted from excerpts of these recorded interviews.

.....

Anne was born in Oak Park, Illinois, one of four children. Her father was of modest circumstances and worked for the Santa Fe Railroad. Anne attended public schools and graduated from Wellesley College. She was always quick to explain that she attended on a scholarship because otherwise the school was beyond the family's means. She taught school for a few years prior to marrying Dr. Bob.

Mother was completely unassuming, deeply in love with Dad, and their love always showed. She did not drink at all, although one time she took me and my sister aside and told us that she was going to act like she was drunk when Dad got home so we were to support her. She put on the worst show of a drunk I'd ever seen! It was embarrassing to me, to my dad, and to my sister; she did a terrible job of acting like a drunk. Anyway, she was so desperate that she tried stuff like that. She took up smoking at the age of fifty-five and explained to me that if I waited until I was fifty-five to smoke she wouldn't criticize me.²

Mother was a deeply, quietly religious person. Each day she had her own "quiet time" (as she put it) for communication with the Lord. At that time alcoholics were not welcomed at hospitals if they could afford it, which most of them couldn't, so many came into our home and were treated there. Now the treatment fell to Mother's lot because Dad was off to work each day. She had many, many experiences with drunks just coming out of stupors—including being chased around the house with her own butcher knife and people sliding down the drain spouts to search for more alcohol. She remained unflappable throughout with a deep faith and abiding love for these derelicts and their families. But she soon reached the point where it was very difficult to shock her anymore.

Some stayed for months and were accepted as part of the family—Archie was with us over a year. They shared in what we had and Mother was their daytime mentor. Her serenity among these circumstances bred serenity among the alcoholics. Her

counseling was done quietly and selflessly. She never lost faith in these guys. Of course, she was the one who was cooking the meals, making the beds, and cleaning up the messes. She was also the one on the telephone answering the inquirers as the word began to trickle out. She made everyone who stayed there have a quiet time in the morning when they might feel nearer to God—this was a requirement which involved some reading of the Bible and study. It was one of her rules.

AA wasn't an instant success, and it was thought of as a "cult" or "a bunch of nuts" and Mom endured all the snubs. We got kicked out of the Presbyterian Church on account of AA, so it must have been very difficult for her but she never lost faith.

At AA meetings she always sat in the back of the room and always put newcomers at ease by quietly greeting them. She bore the poverty of the times without complaint and spent virtually nothing on herself.

In later life her eyesight failed to the point where she could just distinguish movement across the room. One operation for removal of cataracts was a failure, so she would not permit an operation on the other as she said she still had some vision and believed that was better than none. Only after she was gone did it dawn on me that this deep, considerate, quiet person who would do battle for what she believed or to protect our family was the solid foundation that Dr. Bob needed to carry on his part of AA.³ ☞

THE STORY OF ANNE and her influence on AA and the Al-Anon Family Groups began on a Saturday afternoon, May 11, 1935, when she received a phone call from an acquaintance she had met at the local Oxford Group meeting. A nondenominational Christian movement, the Oxford Group had begun in 1921 and grown rapidly throughout the world. Anne had been attending Oxford Group meetings with her husband, Dr. Bob, hoping that he might somehow find a way to stop drinking.

Up to that point, both she and Dr. Bob had tried everything

available to them to get him to stop drinking, but as Dr. Bob later said, "I just kept getting tight every night." Dr. Bob's drinking was continuous and had completely gotten out of hand. They were on the brink of losing their Akron, Ohio, home and his medical practice.

This particular May afternoon was the eve of Mother's Day, and Dr. Bob had come home with a potted plant. While the beautiful spring plant sat on the table, he was passed out drunk upstairs. The phone rang and it was Henrietta Seiberling from the Oxford Group. Henrietta was excited about a visitor from New York who might be able to help Dr. Bob with his drinking problem. His name was Bill W.

Bill, a businessman, had recently found the answer to his alcoholic problem. As part of his own recovery, he was trying to help others. He had been sober for five months, but on this day his sobriety was a bit shaky. Bill had just concluded several days of intense business meetings in what turned out to be an unsuccessful proxy battle to gain interest in a company. If the meetings had been successful, he would have been back on his feet financially and would have likely been named president of the company.

But the meetings had failed and all that was left was a dim flicker of hope that somehow Bill might be able to salvage the deal in the coming weeks. He was broke, discouraged, and alone at the Mayflower Hotel in Akron with not even enough money to get back home to New York. This had been Bill's first real opportunity to reclaim his successful business status since sobering up.

Just five months earlier, in December 1934, Bill had been lying in a bed at Towns Hospital on Central Park West. He recalled his experience in a 1956 recorded interview: "My wife was downstairs talking with the doctor. I had been there before; it was the end of a long road. And she was asking the doctor why I couldn't stop drinking and the good man was obliged to tell her that I had an obsession of the mind that condemned me to drink against my will, a sensitivity to the body which he called an allergy, so that if the drinking was continued I would be destined to go mad or die. In fact, he told her frankly that she would soon have to lock me up if my life is to be saved. It was the end of the road and I knew it. I was a hopeless alco-

holic and in those days the chance of recovery was rated at one, two, or three percent.”⁴

During this hospital stay, Bill had a “profound spiritual experience.” In the same interview, he described the experience this way:

My friend visited me there. At first I was suspicious. I was afraid I was going to be evangelized again. I asked him what his simple little formula was. Again he repeated it. “Get honest with yourself. Confess your faults. Make amends to those you’ve harmed. Try to help other people without any thought of reward, and pray to whatever God you think there is—if only as an experiment.” It was just as simple, yet just as mysterious, as that. When he had gone, I fell into a terrific depression and in the bottom of that depression I cried out even as a small child might, “IF THERE IS A GOD, WILL HE SHOW HIMSELF!”

Instantly the place lit up electric white. It seemed to me that I stood on the top of a mountain, a great wind was blowing, which I have realized was not of air but of spirit. When the ecstasy subsided, I lay on the bed. It seemed to me that I was now in a new world where everything was all right. A great peace settled over me.⁵

Bill went on to say that he was instantly released of the obsession to drink and had not been seriously tempted since.

Bill worked frantically to try to sober up alcoholics in the New York City area while attending Oxford Group meetings with his wife, Lois. He would call on alcoholics at the hospital and take them home. At times this work was discouraging because none of them were staying sober. Bill was so enlightened by his own spiritual experience that he felt others should become enlightened in the same way.

He recalled what his doctor, William Silkworth, had suggested: “Bill, you can soften these people up if you will pour it into them how hopeless this really is—an obsession of the mind which condemns one to drink and an allergy that condemns one to go mad or die. Why don’t you throw that dose into them first and then maybe they will buy this moral psychology of yours.”⁶

Bill now paced the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, feeling discouraged by the failed business meetings. He was likely homesick as well,

from being away from Lois. At one end of the lobby was a bar and at the other end a church directory. Bill said this was the first real temptation he had experienced since sobering up. He knew he needed someone right then or he might drink.

Bill selected a name from the church directory and made the call that led to a meeting that very afternoon with Henrietta Seiberling, a non-alcoholic member of the Oxford Group. When he arrived at her house, he told her his story and his need to talk to another alcoholic.

Henrietta was excited and wanted to get Bill and Dr. Bob together right away. She felt this might be the answer to her and Anne's prayers. She called over to Dr. Bob's house and learned through Anne that he was in no condition to meet with anyone that day. Anne promised to have him over to Henrietta's the following day.

On May 12, 1935, Mother's Day, Anne and Dr. Bob arrived at the Seiberling estate's gatehouse, where Henrietta was living. This is where Dr. Bob and Bill W., the cofounders of AA, met for the first time. Bob Jr. drove his mother and father to the meeting and he had this to say about his father on that day: "He had a terrible hangover and finally he said, 'Okay, fifteen minutes of this bird is all I want.' But folks, when we got there he and Bill went off to a room by themselves and it wasn't fifteen minutes; they stayed several hours. And as a result of that meeting and at my mother's invitation, Bill came to live at our home there in Akron, Ohio, for all that summer—a three-month period of time. This was the time and the place when Alcoholics Anonymous was first started."⁷

Bob Jr., who became a member of Al-Anon many years later, spoke about growing up in the family home and would often mention that they had very little, that alcoholism and the economic times had reduced them to poverty. He said that if it hadn't been for the mortgage moratorium declared by President Franklin Roosevelt, they would have lost their home.

Bob Jr.'s first wife, Betty, spoke fondly of her mother-in-law: "The most important thing about Anne was that she was a sheltered place for people in trouble. In any given week I doubt that any minister could have counseled more people, prayed with more people.

In times of trouble, so many people rushed to her. She was a rock, a comforter through God's help. So many of us loved her; she was truly a person who went placidly amid the noise and haste."⁸

Anne's work with alcoholics and their families in the earliest days of AA set the example for what would later become the Al-Anon Family Groups. By the mid-1940s, solid groups of AA wives and families had begun gathering for more than just support of their alcoholic husbands.

Lois W., Bill's wife and the cofounder of Al-Anon, spoke of Anne when recalling the summer of 1935.

.....

Annie invited me out there for my vacation. I loved Annie from the minute I saw her. She not only had a heart as big as all outdoors, but it contained great wisdom. She was able to quickly put her finger on the crux of any matter and both the alcoholic and his wife sought her advice. Bob's tireless work with alcoholics at the hospital brought numbers of them to Akron to be hospitalized. After their treatment, Annie and Bob would take many of them in for a more or less protracted stay at their home.

Hosts of groups sprang from this contact and in these early groups both married partners were indefatigable in working with alcoholics and their wives. I wonder if you realize how slow AA grew in the beginning. By 1939, there were only one hundred members and a handful of groups, but as the numbers swelled, members of the older groups visited as many of the new as possible.

Bill and I were freer to do more of this traveling than were Annie and Bob. Wherever we visited, there was always an opportunity for Annie and me to talk to the local wives. We always told these newer mates how we had found that we also needed AA's Twelve Steps. Most of us felt a desire even from the beginning to get together and discuss our side of the alcohol problem and to search for ways for our own development.⁹ ☞

EVEN THOUGH Al-Anon Family Groups didn't officially begin until June 1951—two years after Anne died—it is unquestionable that she was an inspiration for Al-Anon's development. Many of the early wives and husbands wrote letters after Anne died in June 1949, describing their memories and experiences with Anne. The following is a sampling of these letters.¹⁰ The impact Anne's life had on these AA members and their families is clearly demonstrated in the words of her friends.

.....

On Friday night when I went to the house on Ardmore Avenue I met the most thoughtful, understanding person I have ever known. After talking with her a while, I addressed her as Mrs. S_____ and she said; "Anne to you, my dear."

Anne taught me to have a "quiet time" in the morning that I might feel near to God and receive strength for the day. She taught me to surrender my husband to God and not to try to tell him how to stay sober, as I had tried that and failed. Anne taught me to love everyone. She said, "Ask yourself, what is wrong with me today if I don't love you?" She said, "The love of God is triangular. It must flow from God through me, through you, and back to God."

In the early part of 1936 Anne organized a "women's group" for wives of alcoholics, whereby in her loving way she tried to teach us patience, love, and unselfishness. When I met and talked with this intelligent deeply spiritual woman I was completely sold on A.A.

—Henrietta D.

I was a cynical, despairing wife of a hopeless alcoholic. In order to assuage my total unhappiness I had carefully tried to destroy within myself all feeling, all longing, and all beauty. I had no friends.

I can never forget my first A.A. meeting—a miracle happened to me that night. Anne met me at the door with disarming friend-

liness. If she had shown pity, it would have increased my resentment. However I was an equal—someone to be loved. Anne “took me under her wing” as she did all the wives preceding me and hundreds more to follow.

Anne was gentle but she was direct. In the weeks to follow, I eagerly visited with my new-found friends at each meeting. Anne came to me one night and said, “Dorothy, everyone has been so kind to you, never forget that and never forget to welcome the newcomers as you were welcomed.” I have tried to follow that.

I can still hear her chuckle. I can still hear her say, “My dear, I am so glad to see you.”

As I sit here looking at her picture I wish that all wives of alcoholics could have known her. I wish they could know the joy to be found in friendliness to the new member. I wish they could feel the great adventure of casting away self-pity and realize the pleasure of loving others.

—Dorothy

In the days when no one could afford a hospital, in the days when her own kitchen was a battlefield where with prayer and hot coffee and good fellowship and still more hot coffee, a soul was encouraged to go forth and make a fresh stand against liquor, “because this time you’re not alone.” Anne was the chief against despondency and despair.

Think back now to those struggling days of 1935. Bill and Dr. Bob and some others would probably tell you that for a time Anne literally was Alcoholics Anonymous. The transition from family group to national organization was in vast degree her accomplishment.

She knew what was the right thing to do and had the courage to do it. Intuitively she began to set up each new convert as a friend, and yet as a separate and distinct unit. People write of her now as if, though departed, she still is with them. That was Anne’s special message. “Carry God in your heart. Walk where you will walk with the knowledge that your friends are

near you," she counseled. She planted self-confidence in people's hearts and imparted the secret of her own unquestioning faith. It is a reservoir of hope that those who use it find adequate and never-failing.

As with the young man from a distant city who lived for ten months in Anne and Dr. Bob's home. "At first I knew in my heart that nothing would ever persuade me to go back to my home city," he writes. "After six months with Dr. Bob and Anne I realized I must go back to the same place where I had fouled up. Anne didn't tell me so. She helped me see myself in the right light so the decision came to me slowly and naturally." Let us add permanently.

Sometimes the miracle that Anne affected took place more simply. A handshake at an A.A. meeting, an introduction to various friends, perhaps a visit to the home—no one kept any count. Anne did no preaching, but she sometimes wrapped a key message up in a neat package. "People have been good to you here," she told one. "Be sure that you go out of your way to extend a welcome to newcomers whenever you meet them."

People speak of her knowing how to say the right thing in just the right way. To a newcomer, case-hardened, fearful of facing embarrassment, negative in her thinking, because she has seen her drinking husband "reformed" before and was dubious about the whole thing she said merely, "We are all here for the same purpose. Everything will be all right." And everything was all right.

But it was in the greater and still unknown field of the human soul that Anne effected her works. From that fateful day in 1935 when A.A. took shape in the persons of Bill W. and Dr. Bob, both uncertain as to what each could do for himself but both determined to help the other, she saw her field of usefulness and seized it. No man or woman is powerful enough to defeat alcoholism unaided, but any sincere alcoholic can help rescue some other alcoholic, and in the saving win himself freedom. That was the

program, and with God's aid and her husband's tremendous power—he was and is a big man, a man of deep voice and greatness of spirit—she set herself to extend this program to reach thousands who asked to be freed from the slavery of drink.

Truly her soul goes marching on.

—F.B.B.

I shall always remember Anne. It was at the Kings School meeting that I first met this remarkable woman. Being a stranger there, I can still remember her coming over and talking to me. She inquired if it was my first meeting and I remember the genuine interest she showed concerning me, and my efforts to learn about this way of life.

It was February 1948 that I planned to go to New Mexico for three weeks or so. As Dr. Bob and Anne were going to New Mexico also it was mutually agreed that I would drive their car as Anne was not well. She and Dr. Bob would go by train and we would turn the car over to them at Clovis, New Mexico.

We were caught in a very bad blizzard and had an accident damaging the rear fender and bumper. A garage man estimated the damage at less than \$50.00 but could not repair the car due to lack of parts and so we continued the rest of the trip with deep misgivings—heart sick wishing it could have been our own car. We met Dr. Bob and Anne at the station in Clovis and immediately told them the bad news. Dr. Bob asked simply, "How bad is it" and was told, "Not too bad doctor." We walked to the car—Anne reassuring my wife—asking about our trip—how she felt—and showed no apparent concern about the car.

When we reached the car the good doctor saw it [the damage], smiled, and said, "I could've done better than that." Anne chuckled and said, "Oh that's nothing, the doctor has done worse than that." Immediately—when she chuckled—we both felt relieved of our tension.

—Gabe

It was a great privilege to become acquainted with Anne in December nineteen hundred and forty-one. At that time we were attending our second AA Meeting and Dr. Bob was the speaker. That evening in Toledo, Ohio, somehow or other by more than a coincidence I believe, we were among a few who were invited to meet Doctor Bob and Anne after the meeting. Anne was so sympathetic and interested in us that we loved her immediately and from that time on our friendship strengthened through the years.

Anne, to me, was much more than a friend. She represented something so fine and came the closest to being a spiritual body of any person I ever hope to know.

During the time when her eyes were failing so rapidly she did not seem to be filled with fear as so many of us would have been. Instead, she had those spiritual qualities which enabled her to adjust to the situation so beautifully and continued to be so interested in and thoughtful of others. She was so cheerful throughout the operations, even though the outcome was doubtful, that I thought her philosophy must have been:

*The inner side of every cloud
Is bright and shining
And so—I turn my clouds about,
And always wear them inside out—
To show the lining.*

—Myrtle

There never seemed to be a striving for self-glory or a "setting herself up as an authority." Rather I got the impression of a precious wonder and thankfulness, that in her way she could be one of God's channels in sharing with others the soul satisfaction and peace which she had found.

May we be very careful not to saddle Ann's personality with the deadliest of all our errors that can hold mankind back from spiritual growth—namely spiritual pride. May we loose her in our consciousness so that she may continue on in her kind, loving, understanding and humble way, working only for the Glory

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The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, which also serve as Al-Anon's Twelve Steps (appendix B), are reprinted from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th edition (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. 2001).

Chapter 7 includes four articles reprinted from the *AA Grapevine*: page 108, "Points of View," July 1944; page 110, "Express Your Appreciation," August 1946; "PO Box 1475," April 1952; and "Encouragement for New Members' Wives in NAA," March 1952. "Anne S.," in Appendix A, appeared in the *AA Grapevine* in July 1949. All are copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc. Reprinted with permission. Permission to reprint The AA Grapevine, Inc., copyrighted material in this publication does not in any way imply affiliation with or endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or The AA Grapevine, Inc.

About the Author

MICHAEL FITZPATRICK is coauthor with William G. Borchert of *1000 Years of Sobriety* and is one of the leading historians and speakers in the field of alcoholism, specializing in the development of the Twelve Step movement. He owns what is possibly the largest audio archive related to the Twelve Step movement ever assembled, containing more than three thousand original reel-to-reel recordings of the voices of the men and women who pioneered the Twelve Step movement. Mike is in the process of digitizing these recordings, which are now being made available online at recoveryspeakers.org. Many of the transcripts in this book and recordings included in the accompanying CD and e-book are from this archive.

Mike lives in Chandler, Arizona, with his wife, Joy, and their three children. He and Joy work together to operate his business as a book broker and marketing consultant. Over the years Mike has written sales promotional pieces and training manuals for several major corporations. He has traveled extensively throughout the United States and Canada as a guest speaker and sales leader, motivating and inspiring his audiences with both his humor and his inspirational message of hope. His message to sales organizations is "attitude is everything!"

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MICHAEL FITZPATRICK is a leading historian and speaker in the field of alcoholism, specializing in the development of the Twelve Step movement. For this book, he drew from his own audio archive, possibly the world's largest collection of recordings of the Twelve Step pioneers and their legacy over the decades. He is coauthor with William G. Borchert of *1000 Years of Sobriety: 20 People x 50 Years*.



Includes an audio CD tracing Al-Anon's growth in the words of its early leaders (10 tracks, 70 minutes).

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