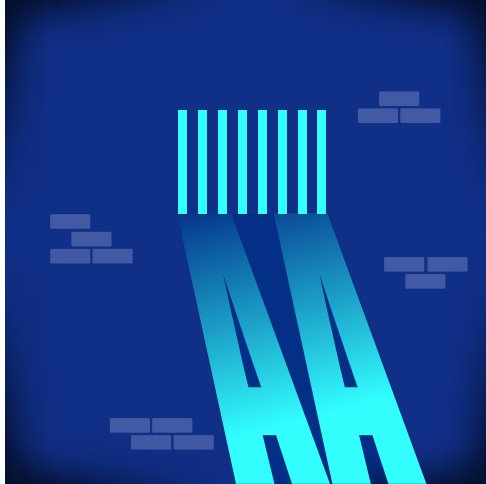
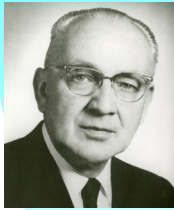


“WHAT IF I NEEDED AN A.A. MEETING AND THERE WAS NONE?”



from the A.A. flyer “Carrying the Message into Correctional Facilities”

Dr. William Silkworth, Henrietta Seiberling, Sister Ignatia, Father Ed Dowling, Sam Shoemaker. Names of just a few of the early non-alcoholic friends of Alcoholics Anonymous without whose contributions A.A. as we know it would most definitely not exist as it does today, if at all. I will bet, however, that one name you are not familiar with is that of one Clinton T. Duffy. He, too, played a big part in helping our program reach those who wanted and needed it.



Five years after the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous, Duffy took a position as Temporary Warden at San Quentin Prison. It was an assignment that was supposed to last for 30 days. He ended up staying for 12 years and is known for having introduced numerous prison reforms during his tenure, many of which were considered to be bold and controversial and which have long since become integral parts of prison life. Among the reforms Duffy introduced were the elimination of corporal punishment, desegregation of the dining halls and other facilities, and the introduction of vocational training programs. He also increased medical staff and hired mental health professionals. These reforms were the result of Duffy's strongly held belief

that “confinement itself is the punishment”, and that beyond that every reasonable effort should be made to help an inmate become a better person while incarcerated.

Possibly the most controversial of Duffy's innovations was the establishment in 1942 of the first A.A. meeting in a prison. At that time, of course, alcoholics were still considered to be among the ‘defects’ of society who just couldn't or wouldn't help themselves and were simply lost causes. But Duffy's response to skeptics was, “If the program will help one man, I want to start it.” His personal research had shown him that alcohol had been a factor in the imprisonment of almost 70% of the cases of the men in his charge. He felt strongly that the availability of the program of A.A. might help those who had problems with alcohol improve their lives and stay sober during their time behind bars, and also enhance their chances of succeeding on the outside if and when they were released. He saw the program as a ‘win-win for both the prisoner and the prison.’ Duffy's program began to show positive results, and before long A.A. meetings were being formed in other institutions including federal prisons in Georgia and Texas. In time, as we know, A.A. meetings were to be found in prisons all over the U.S. and in many other countries around the world.

Here in Rhode Island, A.A. volunteers have been taking meetings into correctional facilities for many years. Just prior to the arrival of Covid-19 there were four to five A.A. meetings taking place per week in both the men's and women's facilities. The pandemic, of course, brought all of that to a screeching halt. A.A. as a whole responded in impressive fashion by quickly becoming versed in the world of video conferencing. In Area 61 we were back up and running before long with service committees doing their business and over

two hundred A.A. groups meeting online per week. During the two years since then, however, our alcoholic brothers and sisters behind bars have been without the program and fellowship of A.A.

The Corrections Committee is currently working to bring A.A. meetings back to both the ACI and Wyatt facilities. To that end, we are in great need of volunteers to submit applications for clearance in order to be able to participate in prison commitments. At the time of the arrival of the pandemic there were approximately 60 volunteers with up-to-date clearances. Since then, all but about 25 of those clearances have expired and not been renewed. As it stands now, we will quite possibly receive word from the prisons sometime soon that commitments are a ‘go’ and find ourselves without an adequate number of volunteers needed to sustain ongoing meetings.

Whether you are a past volunteer or someone who is considering participating for the first time, we urge you to contact us with any questions you may have. Speaking personally, becoming part of the weekly A.A. commitments at the ACI back in 2016 turned out to be one of the most rewarding and fulfilling aspects of my recovery and service life.

—Bob H.

A bit of A.A./prison trivia: At the International A.A. Convention in Toronto in 2005 the 25-millionth copy of the Big Book was presented to Jill Brown, the then-current warden of San Quentin Prison.

WIN-WIN



The Corrections Committee meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00 PM, both online and in person at the Area 61 office. For more information, join us there or contact us via email at correctionschair@aainri.com or altcorrectionschair@aainri.com. The clearance process usually takes three to four weeks, so . . . the sooner, the better!

Change. That nasty word which, when we first come to Alcoholics Anonymous, seems impossible. “I only have to change one thing in my life – everything! Hahaha.” How many times have we heard this at meetings and laughed along with the speaker, only to be terrified at the prospect of changing anything, never mind everything. . .

Change, we find, is a process. Gradually, we go from obstinance (I’m not doing that!) to consideration (maybe I should do that) to action (I’m doing that) to accomplishment (I can’t believe I’ve done that). And this is something I know because it is how I approached the Twelve Steps when I arrived in Alcoholics Anonymous. Who of us comes into our first meetings, looks at the window shades with the Twelve Steps and says, “I can’t WAIT to do that stuff!” Uh, no one ever.

However, we come to the point (hopefully) where we realize that there is something in Alcoholics Anonymous which we don’t yet have, and in order to get it, we must take some kind of action. We take the action, and we get results! Imagine! Doing things which seem foreign to my way of thinking, things which seem to have nothing to do with

what I perceive to be my problem, things which my mind tells me I don’t need to do – these are the things which I must do in order to change.

The ideas that I brought along with me to A.A. are ideas which will repeatedly injure me.

And so I need to try new and different ideas. The

ideas of Unity. The ideas of Fellowship. The ideas of Service.

When I got to A.A. I didn’t want to do the Steps. So I did them. I didn’t want to learn about the Traditions. So I learned about them. And I did NOT want to be involved with Service. Oh, I did Service, but it was the real Service of going through the Big Book with others, of going to Treatment Centers and our State Prison and carrying the message at those places. I was (and still am) very active in

**I’M NOT DOING THAT!
I SHOULD DO THAT
I’M DOING THAT
I CAN’T BELIEVE I’VE DONE THAT
I CAN’T WAIT TO DO THAT STUFF!**



that aspect of Service. But then a funny thing happened. A couple of the guys who went through the Steps with me were involved in that other Service. One was the Treatment Chair in our Area, and the other was the Area Chairiya or something like that. I constantly chided them for wasting their time doing that stuff, and I realized I had what I thought I was incapable of – contempt prior to investigation. So I became a GSR, joined the Finance Committee, and joined the Corrections and Convention Committees (where I started writing plays for the Convention, but that’s another story).

Then came the day when I raised my hand to stand for Area Chair. And the only reason I did it was to make an amends to the folks in Service when it was my turn to qualify. Of course, the vote went to the hat and my name came out.

Totally unprepared and terrified at the prospect of breaking A.A., I began my two-year commitment. Then I stood for Alternate Delegate, and began my two-year commitment. Then I stood for Delegate, and began my two-year commitment.

Ok, couple of points. The first one is that this is the longest amends I’ve ever had to make, and it won’t end until I chair the State Conventions in ’23 and ’24. But the most important point is something I heard a couple years ago at NERAASA. “God doesn’t call the qualified. God qualifies the called.” I took a chance. I raised my hand and

dove into something which I had no idea how to tackle. But that’s the beauty of the whole story. I don’t have to know how to do something before I do it. I take a chance and I learn how to do something. And that requires a change in thinking, which comes by taking those chances. Which requires a change in thinking. Which comes by taking those chances. Which one comes first? Doesn’t matter. They work together. And by taking chances, I became an Area Delegate and attended two General Service Conferences. And you know what? I can’t believe I’ve done that.

—Steve L.



IDEAS WHICH WILL REPEATEDLY INJURE ME

Area Officers

Delegate Alison H.
AreaDelegate@ainri.com

Alternate Tricia I.
AreaAltDelegate@ainri.com

Area Chair Lauren P.
AreaChairperson@ainri.com

Secretary Grace N.
AreaSecretary@ainri.com

Treasurer Matthew R.
Treasurer@ainri.com

Archivist Don B.
Archivist@ainri.com

Registrar Donna T.
Registrar@ainri.com

Committee Chairs

Archives Chair John N.
ArchivesChair@ainri.com

Convention 2023 Chair Steve L.
ConventionChair@ainri.com

Cooperation with the Professional Community/ Public Information Jessamyn S.
CPCPIChair@ainri.com

Corrections Chair Rachele B.
CorrectionsChair@ainri.com

Grapevine Martina B.
GrapeVineChair@ainri.com

Information Services John E.
InformationServices@ainri.com

RISCYPAA Host Chair Johnny M.

Treatment/Accessibilities Kurt A.
TreatmentChair@ainri.com