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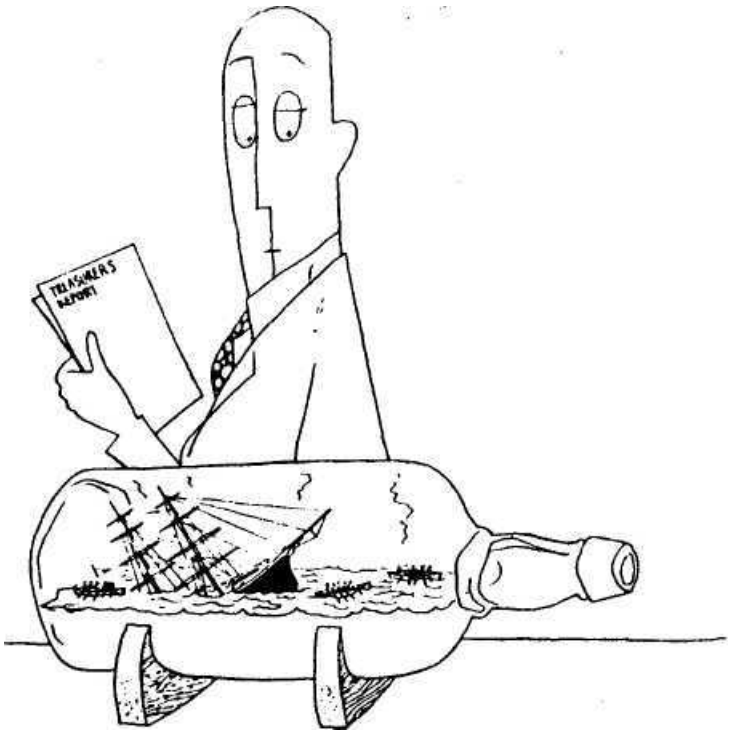

MEET THE NON-ALCOHOLIC TRUSTEES

By Bill

WHY does AA's Alcoholic Foundation have eight non-alcoholics on its Board? What do they do, and how did they get there in the first place? There are some mighty good answers to these oft heard queries.

It all started this way. Back there in 1937 we figured we needed a lot of money. We considered going into the hospital business and thought of putting out some sort of paid AA missionaries. Even more sure, we would have to publish a book. Since we didn't have that kind of cash, we had to look around. These needs, real (and imaginary!), got us on the search for non-alcoholics who had money. Or who could get some for us.

Many have heard me tell the story how, through my brother-in-law, Dr. Leonard V. Strong, we met Mr. Willard S. Richardson, one of the finest friends AA can ever have. In our early extremity we certainly thought he had great promise for, you see, he was a close friend and associate of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. His interest in us was immediate and lively. Our money problems were solved, we felt sure. Providentially, that was not to be the case. Nevertheless Mr. Richardson quickly assembled a company of non-alcoholics who were at once infected with his own enthusiasm for what we were doing. Those early friends, Dick Richardson, Leonard Strong, Frank Amos, A. LeRoy Chipman and Albert Scott will surely appear in the forefront of any history of Alcoholics Anonymous to be written.

At first, though, they were rather disappointing; these men were not so sure we needed large sums of money — an opinion still more strongly held by Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. when approached later on. Little did we guess that the wisdom of these new friends was soon to save Alcoholics Anonymous from professionalism and the perils of great wealth.

By the spring of 1938, however, most of our new sponsors concluded that we could safely use a little money. Our grandiose ideas of hospitals and missionaries had evaporated, but we were still very sure we ought to publish a book of recovery experience. Earlier in the year, Mr. Rockefeller had set aside a sum in assistance to Dr. Bob and me personally. But the end of that was in sight. The book project definitely needed funds.

This was the point at which the Alcoholic Foundation took shape. A trust agreement was drawn in May 1938. Those named above, save Messrs. Scott and Rockefeller, became trustees. We already relied upon their careful judgment and unabating interest. Moreover, AA badly needed friends, people who would stand right up in public and say what they thought about us. Just as Mr. Rockefeller himself did, two years later.

Out of that Foundation creation comes an amusing recollection. None of the alcoholic members of the newly named board were sure they could stay sober. Who, then, would look after the money if all the drunks got drunk? With this potential catastrophe in mind, we inserted into the trust agreement a provision that the number of non-alcoholics on the Board must always exceed the number of alcoholics by one. Just in case!

All during the summer of 1938, with the best of recommendations, we solicited money for our shining new Foundation. There was no result whatever. So in the fall of that

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year, under the name of Works Publishing, Inc., the New York alcoholics and their friends, forty-nine in all, raised funds for the publication of the AA book. The Foundation itself had practically no cash until 1940 when Mr. Rockefeller gave his much publicized dinner for Alcoholics Anonymous. That resulted in approximately $3.000 annually for the Foundation over a period of five years. The Rockefeller family later loaned funds to pay off the cash subscribers to the AA book thereby completing the Foundations ownership. This was about all the money the Foundation ever had from "outside" sources.

Right then, the character of the Foundation began to change. After acquiring the book, the trustees came successively into possession of AA's public relations, its contributions for support of the General Office and, in recent years, *The A.A. Grapevine* which had originally been founded by a separate group of journalistic AAs here in New York City.

So you can see that what began as a simple committee to help Dr. Bob and me along has since evolved into an AA Service Board of custody for our principal affairs. At first concerned only with the problem of money, the Board today operates chiefly in the field of over all policy and business management of the AA General Office and *The A.A. Grapevine.*

As time passed, new faces appeared, both non-alcoholics and alcoholics. Right now the Board numbers fifteen, with a ratio of eight to seven. So comes to mind this question: "What *is* the need for non-alcoholics on the Foundation Board *today?"*

We are apt to forget how remote the Foundation is from the average AA Groups, a situation that changed only last April with the advent of the General Service Conference. Even this body will meet but once a year. In this unique and isolated situation the non-alcoholics have, time after time, proved their immense worth to AA. Because of their detached position they have often shown better judgment than we mercurial and prejudiced alcoholics. Not only have they stabilized our Headquarters operation, they have definitely saved the Foundation from disaster on several occasions. What greater tribute than this could we possibly pay them?

So, shake hands with our non-alcoholic trustees. Here they are:

Jack Alexander — author of the 1941 Saturday Evening Post piece that made AA a national institution and brought release to thousands. How well we love that Jack!

Frank Amos - advertising and newspaper owner, now of Cambridge, Ohio. Frank's tireless interest and patient counsel in the early days and since, will ever be thankfully remembered.

A. LeRoy Chipman — associate of Mr. Rockefeller, a very early Board member, a watchful conscientious treasurer, whose great devotion to our cause ought to be better known and appreciated.

Frank Gulden — new to the Foundation. A prominent churchman, member of the Board of St. Johns Hospital (which cooperates closely with Brooklyn AA) and owner of the noted food enterprise which bears his name. We deem his keen discernment a real find.

Dr. John Norris — Chief Psysician, Eastman Kodak Company. Recently seated at the Foundation Board, Dr. Norris bears a high reputation in the field of industrial medicine. He is notable for his knowledge of alcoholics and is responsible for the wonderful relation that exists between Eastman Kodak and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Fulton Oursler — Senior editor of the Readers Digest. Enjoys world-wide renown as an author and public relations expert. Thousands of AAs have read his "Greatest Story Ever Told." There is no more lovable and ardent AA fan than Fulton.

Bernard Smith — Chairman of the Foundation Board, well-known corporation lawyer, a friend of exceptional vision and good will. His ceaseless advocacy of the General Service Conference idea from the moment it was first proposed entitles him to our everlasting gratitude.

Dr. *Leonard V. Strong* — The one whose connection with Mr. Willard Richardson led to the creation of the Foundation. He's been secretary virtually ever since. No one has attended more meetings nor worked harder than Leonard to bring the Foundation where it is today. He happens to be my brother-in-law. In the last days of my drinking, his unfailing confidence and medical attention probably saved my life.

Mr. Willard S. Richardson, Trustee Emeritus. This good friend, retired now, is affectionately remembered by all who served with him as the one who infused wonderful spiritual substance and fine wisdom into our Foundation activity from the beginning. Behind his back, we call him "Uncle Dick." That speaks volumes, doesn't it?

Leonard V. Harrison — No roll call would be complete without him. He served as Chairman of the Foundation Board during those very uncertain years of AA's adolescence when we shivered for fear the forces which would rend us apart might win out. In this period of severe strain, our friend's steady hand at the Foundation helm kept us off many a shoal. We here record our timeless thanks.

Now you have met our non-alcoholic trustees. Where would AA have been today without them? As for me, I'd rather not guess.