

# Higher Ground



## Now...for the rest of the story

### Lesser known History of AA – The Growing Years

(Underlining added by Higher Ground for emphasis)

**1940** - AA Census estimate: 22 groups and 1,400 members.

**1941** - Jack Alexander's Saturday Evening Post article was published on March 1, 1941. Its impact on AA growth was enormous. It was AA's most notable public relations blessing. During 1941, AA membership surged from around 2,000 to over 8,000. Reprints of the article became a favored pamphlet and it is still reprinted to this day. Over 6,000 inquiries were sent to the NY Office during 1941 because of the article. The NY Office asked the groups for donations of \$1 per member per year for extra staff to respond to all the inquiries. This began the practice of financing what is today called GSO from group and member donations.

**1941** - In its early years the NY office was called either the "Headquarters" or "Central Office" or "General Office." It provided a central mail link to members attempting to start groups and helping them with growing pains. Over time, accumulated letters sent in by the groups and members gave firm signals of a need for guidelines to help with group problems that seemed to occur repeatedly. Basic ideas for the Traditions came from these letters and the principles defined in the Foreword to the first edition Big Book.

**1941** - June 30, Ruth Hock sent out AA Bulletin #3 announcing that over 4,400 letters had been answered in the three months since the Post article was published. Correspondence was being maintained with 116 cities. At the end of the bulletin Ruth reported "One of our NY members clipped the following from the personal column of a NY paper and since it seems to 'hit the spot' here it is. GOD GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE, COURAGE TO CHANGE THINGS I CAN, AND WISDOM TO KNOW THE: DIFFERENCE". For years within AA, it was called "The AA Prayer" instead of "The Serenity Prayer." It is attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr whose 1932 version differs somewhat from the popular version. The member who discovered the prayer is reputed to be NY newspaperman Jack C who found it in the Public Notices section of the May 28, 1941 NY Herald-Tribune.

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**1941** - September, Ernie G married Dr Bob's adopted daughter Sue. He was almost twice her age. Both Dr. Bob and Anne strongly objected to the marriage. Ernie could not stay sober and the marriage was a disaster. He and Sue had two children, a son Mickey and a daughter Bonna who suffered from mental illness compounded by alcoholism and drug addiction. Tragically, on June 11, 1969, Bonna committed suicide after taking the life of her 6-year-old daughter Sandy. Ernie G died two years later to the day. Sue passed away on February 9, 2002.

**1941** - December 8, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the US entered World War II. With the prospect of being recalled to active Army duty, Bill W requested he be granted a royalty on book sales to provide financial support for his wife Lois. The board approved a 10% royalty (35 cents). Prior to this, Dr Bob was voluntarily giving Bill half the 10% royalty he and Anne were infrequently receiving. Bill's royalty became his sole source of income. An exception occurred in the mid-1940s when his income averaged \$1,700 over seven years. The board made a grant to Bill of \$1,500 for each of the seven years for a total of \$10,500 out of which Bill purchased his Bedford Hills house.

**1942** - October, with the help of San Francisco AA members and Warden Clinton T Duffy, the first AA prison group was established in a maximum-security prison at San Quentin Penitentiary. It generated much favorable national publicity.

**1942** - October, Clarence S stirred up a controversy after discovering that Dr Bob and Bill W were receiving royalties from Big Book sales. Bill sought counsel from Father Edward Dowling who suggested that Bill and Dr Bob could certainly not accept money for 12<sup>th</sup> Step work but should accept royalties as compensation for "special services." This later formed the basis for Tradition Eight and Concept Eleven. Both co-founders dedicated so much time to the Fellowship, it was impossible for them to earn a living through their normal professions.

**1945** - Earl T founder of AA in Chicago, suggested to Bill W that the experiences sent in from group and member letters might be codified into a set of principles to offer tested solutions to avoid future problems. Earl suggested to Bill that he codify the Traditions and write Grapevine essays on them.

**1945** - November 16, Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett made Charles R Jackson's novel "The Lost Weekend" into a hard-hitting movie about alcoholism for Universal Pictures. It starred Ray Milland and Jane Wyman and was a sensation winning four Oscars. Its realistic portrayal of alcoholism generated favorable publicity for AA. The success of the multiple Oscar winning movie led three Hollywood studios to offer AA up to \$100,000 for rights to its story. The Alcoholic Foundation declined.

**1950** - July 28-30, AA's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and 1<sup>st</sup> International Convention convened in Cleveland, OH with around 3,000 attending. Registration was \$1.50. Bill W chronicled the proceedings in a September Grapevine article titled "We Come of Age." It was the only International Convention attended by Dr Bob who was determined to be there despite his terminal cancer.

**1950** - AA members were asked to donate \$2 per year to support the NY office.

**1950** - AA Census estimate: 3,527 groups and 96,475 members.

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## Upcoming Events

### Local

Oct 17 – Area 48 Voting Assembly,  
[www.aahmbny.org](http://www.aahmbny.org)

Nov 1-3 -

### On The Road

Nov. 14 –Madison, WI- (virtual)  
Youngtimers/Oldtimers Workshop  
10am-2pm ID 840 6863 3539

## District Meeting Schedule

Oct. 13	Nov. 10
Virtual on Zoom @ 7:30	
ID: 895 8996 2911	
Password: 212057	



Lois B Wilson

## A48 proposes to increase its prudent reserve by 200%

At its Oct 17 Voting Assembly, Area 48 will consider a proposal to increase its prudent reserve by over 200%: from \$7,000 to \$21,498.

At a time when GSO and A48 have cancelled all face-to-face meetings and when, for the past 6 months A48 has done an adequate job of conducting its business on what amounts to a \$15/mo. Zoom account, the Treasurer wants to hang on to more of your money. At a time when it already has \$27,000 in its treasury, with nowhere to spend it, the Area claims it is about to go broke. While no one knows what post-pandemic “normal” will look like and the Finance Committee admits to having difficulty coming up with a 2021 budget, the Area wants to use past budgets to calculate the Prudent Reserve.

Decide for yourself. The proposal can be reviewed at [aahmbny.org](http://aahmbny.org). Send your GSR on Oct. 17 to vote your group conscience. Zoom id: 812 1468 3507 password: Assembly

## This Month in AA History

Oct 17, 1935 - Ebby T, Bill's sponsor, moves in with Bill and Lois.

Oct 1936 - Bill C. an alcoholic staying at Bill's house, committed suicide using a gas stove.

Oct 21, 1939 - Cleveland Plain Dealer begins series of articles on Alcoholics Anonymous.

Oct 1944 - First non-American branch started in Sydney, Australia. .

Oct 1951 - Lasker Award given to AA by American Public Health Assoc.

Oct 1954 - The "Alcoholic Foundation" was renamed the "General Service Board of A.A."

Oct 1, 1957 - Book "A.A. Comes of Age" is published.

Oct 5, 1988 - Lois Burnham Wilson dies at age 97.

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## Group Anniversaries

- Oct. 1, 1996 Tupper Lake Big Book
- Oct. 7, 1985 Plattsburgh Unity Afternoon Group
- Oct. 9, 1987 Plattsburgh KISS Group
- Oct 19 1997 Lyon Mountain
- Oct.19, 2000 Rouses Point- Fifth Tradition
- Oct.20, 1999 Keene High Peaks Group
- Oct.24, 1994 Saranac Lake- Living Sober Group
- Oct.24, 1994 Saranac Lake Thurs. Women's
- Oct.15, 1986 Saranac Lake Weds. Night Grp.
- Nov. 2, 1994 Saranac Lake Tuesday Night Grp
- Nov. 7, 1990 Plattsburgh - Beekmantown BB Study
- Nov.25, 1976 Cadyville - Morrisonville-Cadyville
- Nov.28, 1984 Bloomingdale KISS Group

