

The Courage of Forgiveness

October 17, 2008

Forgiveness and resentment are opposites of the same coin. Resentments are dangerous. The Big Book says they lead to relapse. Forgiveness is safe because it strengthens sobriety, however, the Big Book doesn't say much about forgiveness.

In the first 164 pages the word "resentment" in all its forms appears twenty-nine times while all forms of "forgiveness" appear only eight times. It seems Bill Wilson and his co-authors were like us: a bit unsure what forgiveness really means.

My starting point is a famous line in the Big Book: "The spiritual life is not a theory; *we have to live it.*" (P. 82) The lived result of resentment is retaliation: and angry retort, road-rage, the cold shoulder, infidelity, sarcasm, pushing the pain button, etc. Sometimes we stuff retaliation inside. As A.A. folk wisdom puts it, "Holding a resentment is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die."

If forgiveness is the opposite of resentment, then the lived result of forgiveness is to abandon retaliation - to give up the "old idea" that we have a right to strike back. Belief in that fictitious right feels good. What's better than a justified resentment? It can excuse all sorts of trouble-making. However, even if the other person is truly more at fault than we are, that doesn't make any difference. A resentment is a resentment. The spirituality of the Big Book is to give up the phony right of retaliation no matter what. That takes courage - the courage of forgiveness.

Sometimes we think we've given up retaliation when we haven't. This happens when we make a big point of how forgiving we are: "There, there, Honey. Don't be upset. I forgive you completely." Sounds nice, but it's a power trip and probably a lie. Said that way, "I forgive" reminds Honey that we might not have forgiven and might have struck back, that it was only through great generosity of heart that we refrained from slapping Honey upside the head. Obviously this is not forgiveness. It's an implied threat. Real forgiveness goes further. It not only abandons the right to retaliate, it also abandons the right to threaten retaliation and even to imply that threat. Either one forgives or one does not. Going on and on about how much one forgives may reveal a hidden treat. Of course one should say, "Honey, you hurt my feelings." My point is to leave it at that. If we are going to forgive, there can be no second shoe to drop, no secret hope of future pay-back. If Honey is unable to understand that we've been hurt, there's nothing we can do. We are powerless over the other's sensitivity or lack of it and good intentions or bad.

Continued on page 5

LIFELINE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
CENTRAL OFFICE OF SALT LAKE CITY, INC.

We welcome your correspondence and will publish your material, space permitting, if it meets editorial criteria. *Share your experience, strength and hope with another alcoholic.* For a free subscription or to submit articles, suggestions or contributions, contact Central Office of Salt Lake City:

CENTRAL OFFICE OF SALT LAKE CITY, INC.

80 West Louise Avenue
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

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**CENTRAL OFFICE
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Central Office is to provide the basic services listed, to include, but not limited to:

- To carry the A.A. message and help those individuals who suffer from alcoholism;
- to maintain a 24-hour Twelve-Step phone service;
- to answer phone inquiries as needed;
- to compile, update and print meeting lists;
- to maintain A.A.-approved literature for sale to members and the public;
- and to print and distribute a newsletter.

Specifically excluded shall be the operation of any club, clubhouse or drying-out place, and acts in violation of the Twelve Traditions of A.A.

“Let us never be a closed corporation; let us never deny our experience, for whatever it may be worth, to the world around us. Let our individual members heed the call to every field of human endeavor. Let them carry the experience and spirit of A.A. into all these affairs, for whatever good they may accomplish. For not only has God saved us from alcoholism; the world has recieved us back into its citizenship.”

A.A. Comes of Age, pp. 232-233

Suiting up and Showing Up

**Groups Represented At the
Central Office Reps Meeting for:**

October 2008

YOUNG AND ALIVE	A VISION FOR YOU
BIGUGLIES	SOBERSISTERS
CAME TO BELIEVE	NO NONSENSE
OFF THE CUFF	SPIRITUAL QUEST
974 GROUP	WELCOME HOME
UNITY LUNCH	AN A.A. GROUP
GARDEN VARIETY	SHARING AND CARING
CANDLELIGHT;	ROUNDTABLE
YOUNG AND ALIVE	AFTERNOONERS
COME AS YOU ARE	BOGIRISH
AS BILL SEES IT	MIDVALE LUNCH
WE CARE	HONEY'S BREAKFAST
FOOTHILL GROUP	HAPPY DESTINY
LIVING IN SOBRIETY	RICHARD STREET LUNCH
OLD FASHION A.A.	SUNDAY BREAKFAST
DRAPER FIRESIDE	A WAY OUT
BASIC YOUNG PEOPLE	MURRAY GROUP

Is Your Group Represented?

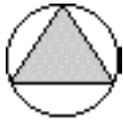
The next C.O. Reps Meeting is the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 P.M. at Central Office, 80 West Louise Ave. (2860 South)

Please visit our website for meeting information.

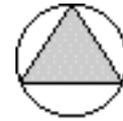
www.saltlakeaa.org

To reduce our costs, Central Office would like to update our mailing list for the **LIFELINE**. If you have moved please contact C.O. at 484-7871

Thank you.



Upcoming Events,



November 27th — 30th; **42nd Las Vegas Roundup**, Las Vegas, NV.

contact: www.lasvegasroundup.org

January 8th — 11th, 2009; **19th Annual River Roundup**, Laughlin, NV.

River Cities Intergroup @ www.rcco-aa.org

February 12th — 15th, 2009;

45th International Women's Conference, Salt Lake City, UT.

New Meetings:

The **Journey to Freedom** meeting is at 9160 South 300 West. (the office building next to Standard Plumbing in Sandy) It is an open meeting that starts at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

The **Grantsville Good News** is meeting at 151 Cooley Street (the V.F.W.) in Grantsville on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. This is an open meeting.

Beginning November 17th - Unity Lunch Bunch-noon-MTWTF and 5:15 Happy Hour - 5:15-MTWTF will be meeting at 777 So. 1300 E. - Church - rear entrance.

SPECIAL EVENT

CENTRAL OFFICE FUNDRAISER

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH

ST. AMBROSE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1975 SOUTH 2300 EAST

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

DINNER - 5:30 - 6:30 PM SPEAKER MEETING - 7:00 - 8:00 PM

COST: \$25.00 FOR DINNER AND MEETING

JUST THE SPEAKER MEETING - DONATIONS GLADLY ACCEPTED

IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD DINNER, SERVICE POSITIONS ARE AVAILABLE.

CALL JAN @ (801) 440-6187

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR BIRTHDAYS!

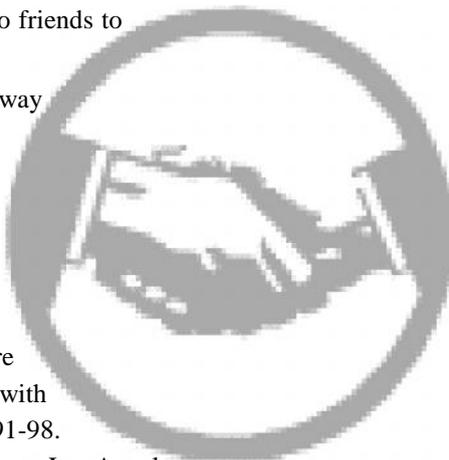
The History of “Lone Endeavor”

The history of “Lone Endeavor,” as related by Thom R.:

When the original manuscript was written, Bill and Ruth and another man that was helping out by the name of Hank P. (Hank wrote the chapter “To Employers” but relapsed when he found out that he wasn’t going to be the Grand Poobah of AA because of it) were sending copies of the manuscript around the country to friends to proofread, comments, “beta-test <g>”, etc.

Somehow a copy of the manuscript found its way and get sober. He wrote the letter to The story.

This was the first time that anybody ever sober, so everyone was very excited. The the story, and Ruth put the whole thing that it was going to be going to be the 12th goes. (Have you ever wondered WHY there are 11 Chapters?) The First Edition was released with story of the book. It was originally on pages 391-98. is documented in the story, a telegram was sent to Los Angeles, wired back that he would. The New York Group took up a collection amongst themselves and wired him a bus ticket. When the bus showed up in New York, a man fitting his given description did NOT exit the vehicle.



to Los Angeles, and a man was able to read it Foundation in New York that is included in the

heard of the book ALONE getting someone written exchanges took place that appear in together. It was supposedly originally planned Chapter of the Basic Text, or so the legend 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts, but only The “Lone Endeavor” appearing as the final After the correspondence that took place that asking if the man would come to New York. He

Confused, the welcoming party asked the driver if he had seen a man of the description aboard the bus at any time. “Oh, yes,” said the driver. “He’s sleeping it off UNDER the back seat!” Boiled as an owl. So, the story was removed from the Second Printing. Oops. Egg on Bills’ face, eh?

Author Unknown

Improve the quality of your sobriety and get out of yourself! Central Office needs volunteers for service work. We need people for 12-Step calls, stuffing envelopes, answering the telephone, et cetera. If you are interested contact Central Office at 484-7871.



Quoted from the 12 Traditions Illustrated, 1971: “Our individual sobriety depends on the group. The group depends on us. We soon learn that unless we curb our individual desires and ambitions, we can damage the group”...



THE COURAGE OF FORGIVENESS, continued

The Traditions assume courageous forgiveness. A.A. is not going to fight the sale of alcohol, even though beverage alcohol is a contributing cause of misery and death. "A.A. does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes." (Preamble) This is the position A.A. takes as a fellowship, and this is precisely the stance of forgiveness - never getting carried away by retaliation.

This may sound like we must become doormats in the program. Not at all. It takes courage to give up the pretense of having a right to fight back. There's a big difference between a doormat and being a humble member of A.A. A doormat suppresses his or her legitimate goals and standards because of fear. A.A. humility is being a "worker among workers" - a human being among human beings, assuming no special powers over others, no special rights to fix them or give them what they deserve. It also means a prudent silence about how wonderfully forgiving we are. There are circumstances when an explicit statement of forgiveness is warranted, but by and large, forgiveness and humility are the same in this respect: if one talks a lot about one's humility or forgiveness, one is not being forgiving or humble.

I am just another recovering alcoholic. I have no high moral platform from which to punish you. If you strike at me and I strike back, I'm not proud of it. Someday the Higher Power may remove this defect of character, mainly, believing that I have the right to retaliate and act on that belief. So long as I am willing to have the Higher Power remove such a bad habit, my sobriety is strengthened.

Up to this point, forgiveness has been described as not doing something. There is also an active side. First, consider the Fellowship's wisdom that we pray every day for two weeks for persons who have hurt us, asking the Higher Power to give them everything that will improve their lives - everything we might want for ourselves. Second, it takes work to stay in a relationship with those who have hurt us. (I'm not including abuse; anyone being abused should leave!) Retaining difficult but non-abusive relationships through forgiveness may lead an ill-intentioned partner or friend to assume he or she can get away with things and hurt us again. It becomes a judgement call whether and when this becomes abuse. Whatever our decision, we cannot base responses on fear of the faults of others; forgiveness is always our choice, and this often requires real courage. The opposite of love is not hate; it is indifference. If there is to be any love in difficult relationships, the people involved have to remain present to each other, and the courage of forgiveness (abandoning the fake right of retaliation) is a big part of personal presence. When we have such courage, we can justifiably esteem ourselves more highly, which in turn supports our daily reprieve from drinking "contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." (P. 85) The real reason for all this talk about courage and forgiveness is to do spiritual maintenance so we don't "go out."

"Love and tolerance of others is our code." (P. 84) Love comes first, and if forgiveness can renew love, that's great! But even if forgiveness only renews the second pick, tolerance, It's still worth it. It is worth it for our own sobriety.

(anonymous)

Anybody Seen My Dragon?

You're still drinking, friend? Then you're just the man I want to see. Want to ask you a question. Over here, where we wouldn't be disturbed.

Question's this: Wonder if you've seen my dragon? Name of Beastly. Nice little guy. For a dragon. Green, with pink spots. Believe me, you couldn't miss ole Beastly!

I was sobbing my eyes out one night because the park bench I was on was going through red lights and I was scared stiff. Suddenly this dragon whammed into the bench and stopped it cold. If I'd thought that I was scared before, Friend, now I was petrified. A dragon! Imagine!

“What's the matter with you, Mithter?” he asked, and that started me laughing like a school kid. Somehow you can't be scared of a dragon that lisps.

“Thtop laughing!” he fumed, and believe me, Friend, I thtopped. I mean stopped. On second thought, you can be scared of a lisping dragon, especially when he closes the damper and flames shoot out of his mouth.

“Thanks for stopping the bench,” I said.

“Nothing. Nothing at all.” At least he was modest.

Turned out the li'l fella didn't have a name, so I called him Beastly, which described him pretty well. Besides, he liked the name. Beastly also liked the smell of sherry. He always came around when I drank it, and sometimes stayed for days after.

Usually, however, he would disappear when I was broke and had to work for a day or two (as a rule I took a position as Asst. Director of a Dishwashing Dept., (Wet Arms Division), but Beastly always showed up again when I got a crock of sherry.

When Beastly stopped that park bench he was about three feet long, but it was amazing how he grew. About a foot a month. At first, he was fun to play with. Throw sticks, that sort of thing. He'd bring 'em back unless he got confused and burned 'em up. But in six months it got to a point where he could stop a Sherman tank with his breath, the ground shook under him when he ran, and if he ran to close to me, the wind would knock me down.

Once a cop found me in that position and asked, “What's the matter with you, fella?” I said, “It was Beastly,” and he agreed, but wouldn't accept it as an answer. Then he smelled the sherry and hauled me off to the cooler, which was dragon proof.

I never saw Beastly again. You see, an AA visited me in jail last month and I got on the program, and since they don't allow spotted dragons to join. . . .

Well, I smelled the sherry on you, Friend, and just thought you might have seen my old pet Beastly. Greatest little dragon I ever met.

Anonymous

The Best of the Grapevine, pages 14 — 15

November 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 2-6p Andrea 6-12a Darlene B
2 9-12 pm OPEN 12-6p An AA Grp 7-9p 974 Grp 9-11p Dave W	3 5:30-10:30 NNS 11-12a Jeff R	4 12-9:30a Jeff R 5:30-10p 10 th Step 10-12a Vivian	5 5:30-7p Afternooners 7-12a Todd K	6 12-7a Todd K 5:30-12a Denise G	7 12-7a Denise G 7-9:30a Andrea 6-12a Grtr Krns	8 3-7p Its in The Book 7-12a Darlene B
9 9-12 pm OPEN 12-6p An AA Grp 6-11p Melissa B	10 5:30-10:30 NNS 11-12a Jeff R	11 12-9:30a Jeff R 5:30-10p 10 th Step 10-12a Vivian	12 5:30-7p Afternooners 7-12a Todd K	13 12-7a Todd K 6:30-10p Hillcrest	14 7-9:30a Andrea 6:30-12a Basic Young Peoples	15 2-7p OPEN 7-12a Magna Friendly Bunch
16 9-12 pm OPEN 12-6p An AA Grp 6-8p OPEN 8-11p Dave W	17 5:30-10:30 NNS 11-12a Jeff R	18 12-9:30a Jeff R 5:30-10p 10 th Step 10-12a Vivian	19 5:30-7p Afternooners 7-12a Todd K	20 12-7a Todd K 5:30-12a Open	21 7-9:30a Andrea 6:30-12a Non Smoking Sbrty Hr	22 2-6p Billy S. 6-10p Grapevine 10-12a OPEN
23 9-12 pm OPEN 12-6p An AA Grp 6-8p OPEN 8-11p Dave W	24 5:30-10:30 NNS 11-12a Jeff R	25 12-9:30a Jeff R 5:30-10p 10 th Step 10-12a Vivian	26 5:30-7p Afternooners 7-12a Todd K	27 12-7a Todd K 5:30-12a Dave S	28 7-9:30a Andrea 5-10p Honey's Breakfast Bunch	29 2-6p OPEN 6-12a OPEN
30 9-12 pm OPEN 12-6p An AA Grp 6-8p OPEN 8-11p Dave W						