

Article 9

Anne Ripley Smith, wife of Dr. Bob, Mother and Co-Founder of A.A.

Pioneer A.A.'s Most Ignored, Forgotten, yet Critically Important Resource

by Dick B.

Part One

Let's meet the woman Bill Wilson and others frequently called the "Mother of A.A." (See Dick B., *Anne Smith's Journal 1933-1939: A.A.'s Principles of Success*, 3rd ed, pp. ix, 10, 54, 137, 139; Sue Smith Windows and Robert R. Smith, *Children of the Healer*, pp. 29, 43, 152; *Women Pioneers in Twelve Step Recovery*, Hazelden, 1999, p. 2).

I'd been going to A.A. meetings regularly for about four years and had never heard Anne Smith's name mentioned. In fact, when I went to the Seattle Convention in 1990, I never heard it mentioned by the diligent historians and archivists attending archives meetings there. I had been advised to read *DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers*, and she was mentioned there. However, I was to learn from Dr. Bob's son that even this mention occurred under strange circumstances. A.A.'s New York archivist suggested to Niles P. that he interview oldtimers. When Niles approached Dr. Bob's son, the son asked, "Are you going to write about my mom?" The answer was, "No." Smitty then said he wouldn't tell the staff writer anything at all, and he asked his sister Sue to do likewise. Later, the staff member returned and picked up such facts as did wind up in the Conference Approved biography of Dr. Bob that was published by A.A.W.S. in 1980.

Now I've been to Akron several times to interview Dr. Bob's daughter, to attend Founders Day Conventions, to interview archivists and historians and oldtimers there, to visit the Intergroup office and Dr. Bob's Home where A.A. was born, the King School Group which was A.A.'s first group, and to interview early participants in the founding years of A.A. such as former Congressman John F. Seiberling, son of A.A. co-founder Henrietta Seiberling. Despite all those visits, I have yet to see any significant, specific, account of Anne Smith's contribution to early A.A. Her precious journal is not present. On the stage at the Conference are pictures of Bob, Bill, and Sister Ignatia; but there was none of Anne Smith on the occasions I attended. So, like so many other quests for our history that I undertook, this one had to begin outside the borders of my own fellowship.

On the plane to Akron for my first interview with Dr. Bob's daughter, I was preparing by reading Ernest Kurtz's *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous*. In an obscure reference in footnote 32, on page 275, of the 1979 edition, Kurtz cited an "extensively annotated copy of Anne Smith's OG "workbook" in A.A. archives." Oddly, Kurtz stated in another footnote, "This writer <http://members.nbci.com/aastuff/index.html> eztone@hotmail.com <http://www.dickb.com> dickb@dickb.com

[Kurtz] was struck in his interviews of 6 and 7 April 1977, that both Lois [Wilson] and Henrietta Seiberling stressed that Anne Smith's role in the beginning of A.A. has been much underrated (footnote 15, pp. 264-65). Kurtz seemed to give little attention either to the Bible,

Quiet Time, Shoemaker, the Oxford Group, or early A.A. literature; and that may explain why he did not publish any significant information about Anne Smith, her role, or her vitally important journal (which Kurtz called a *Workbook*). Whatever the reason, I did not yet grasp the significance of Anne Smith at that point.

Later, as I was reading pages 115-16 of Mary Darrah's *Sister Ignatia: Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous*, I saw a reference to Anne's Oxford Group journal. Darrah seemed to have inspected a portion or portions of Anne's journal; observed its relevance to A.A.; but then moved on with her rendition of Akron history. Not surprisingly, she focused on her own view of Ignatia's importance, and Anne's journal received no significant attention.

Only later did I realize the treasure that needed to be unearthed. Working with author Bill Pittman, A.A. archivist Frank Mauser, Wilson's former secretary Nell Wing, Paul L. who was the archivist at Stepping Stones, and Dr. Bob's daughter Sue Smith Windows, I resolved to obtain Anne's journal and to learn as much of the specifics about her as possible. Sue wrote a letter to A.A. General Services requesting that a copy of Anne's Journal be provided to me. Frank Mauser submitted the request to the Trustees Archives Committee. Approval was granted. And I obtained from GSO a copy for myself to use in my *Anne Smith's Journal*, a copy for Dr. Bob's Home, a copy for Bill Pittman, and a copy for Sue Smith Windows. Sue believes that many pages are missing from New York's document, and I believe I recently may have found some of them.

The important thing in this introductory part is to introduce you to Anne Smith. So let's begin with these facts. Anne came from the Chicago suburb of Oak Park, Illinois. She was one of four children. Her son Robert informed me of the brilliance and business successes and accomplishments of her brothers. Anne herself won a scholarship to Wellesley College. After graduation, she returned to Oak Park, Illinois where she taught school. She met Dr. Bob at a dance at St. Johnsbury Academy where Bob was a senior. Her son likes to say that they finally married after a whirlwind courtship culminating many years later with their marriage on January 25, 1915. She returned with Bob to Akron; and I have been told they first lived down the street from their ultimate home at 855 Ardmore Avenue, in Akron, now called the Birthplace of Alcoholics Anonymous where it all began.

Anne died before Dr. Bob did. The date was June 1, 1949. Bill Wilson asked for letters from fellowship people, telling some of the Anne Smith story. Bill promised to publish them something he never did. But Anne's daughter-in-law Betty Smith obtained those letters and graciously provided them to me for inclusion in my Anne Smith book, and some were!. Regrettably, almost every discussion of Anne has talked more about Dr. Bob, about the fellowship, and about their love for each other, than about Anne's specific importance and contribution to A.A. I have now revised my book on her journal

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three times. See Dick B., *Anne Smith's Journal*, 3rd ed., and I hope to publish the actual contents of journal itself in full before very long. I know it will provide immense assistance to those in A.A. who really want to know and understand what early AAs heard and read and were taught.

Each morning, in the developmental days, AAs came to the Smith home at the crack of dawn for what they joshingly called Anne's Aspiritual pablum. Anne had a Quiet Time with the guys, as her daughter put it, every morning. On those occasions, they would read the Bible, pray, seek God's guidance, and sometimes consult a devotional such as *The Upper Room*. Of great significance is the fact that Anne shared the contents of her journal with the men and invited discussion.

From 1933 to 1939, Anne was writing down materials from the Bible, from the literature she and Bob were reading about the Bible, Jesus Christ, prayer, healing, the Oxford Group, and Sam Shoemaker's views. Her journal is 64 pages, some written in her own hand and some typed for her by her daughter. As a recent chapter on Anne said (apparently paraphrasing my material in *Anne Smith's Journal*):

Bill W. once called Anne Smith the mother of AA. This may have been not only because of her actions, but because of the direct influence of her thoughts and writings on the Twelve Steps and other AA literature. Anne attended Oxford Group meetings from 1933 (two years before her husband's recovery) until 1939, during which she kept a workbook, or Aspiritual journal. Its notes on the Oxford Group principles and her own comments reveal a close, unmistakable similarity to the wording in the Big Book. For example, Anne writes of an Oxford Group prayer, O Lord, manage me, for I cannot manage myself. Note the comparison in the Big Book, Step One (p. 59), the Appertinent ideas (p. 60), and the Third Step prayer in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, or Twelve and Twelve. Another example: Anne writes in her journal, AWe can't give away what we haven't got. Recent scholars cite dozens of similar comparisons (*Women Pioneers in 12 Step Recovery*, Hazelden, 1999).

Although I contributed to *Women Pioneers* a chapter on Henrietta Seiblerling, I was not asked to do the Anne Smith chapter. If I had, there would have been specific references to, and quotations of, the dozens of familiar expressions to which that book's statement refers. But that material has yet to be published in its entirety. Much is covered in my *Anne Smith's Journal* title. This material needs to be presented by someone who realizes that Anne was not merely summarizing AOxford Group principles-- quickly to be discarded. Rather, it is a compendium of A.A. sources, teachings, and ideas of the pioneer years. It covers all six of our major sources: (a) Bible. (b) Quiet Time. (c) Sam Shoemaker's teachings. (d) Oxford Group principles and practices. (e) Anne's own detailed suggestions for Quiet Time, for working with new people, for daily surrenders, for reading, for Bible study, etc. (f) The specific Christian literature early AAs read and from which they borrowed basic, biblical ideas for their program.

In ensuing segments, I will try to provide you with specifics from Anne's Journal. I'll set out <http://members.nbc.com/aastuff/index.html> eztone@hotmail.com
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comments about Anne from manuscripts and letters about her. And I'll challenge you to consider what a great day it would be if, in A.A. and other 12 Step meetings today, members were privileged to hear Anne's Smith's Journal read, to see it in print in **Conference Approved** literature, and to know that it has been removed from the shadows and locked archives and made available as one of the most important tools for recovery in A.A. that has ever been written!

Article 9 Part Two

Quotations From the Original Journal kept by Anne Smith

As we said in the first part of this series on Anne Smith, it is virtually impossible today for AAs to see, enjoy, and utilize the original journal that Dr. Bob's wife assembled and used from 1933 to 1939. We have set out many portions of it in our title *Anne Smith's Journal, 1933-1939*, 3rd ed. Those quotes were used to illustrate how much of Anne's language can still be found in A.A. itself.

Here we want to introduce you to some specific segments that illustrate the diversity, practicality, and love that can be found in the comments of this wonderful woman of early A.A. **B**a non-alcoholic, yet perhaps its most articulate teacher. For it was Bill Wilson himself who said that during his stay at the Smith home in the summer of 1935, it was Anne Smith and Henrietta Seiberling who gave him and Dr. Bob a much needed spiritual infusion.

AGENERAL PRINCIPLES [From page 2 as numbered by GSO]

1. A general experience of God is the first essential, the beginning. We can't give away what we haven't got. We must have a genuine contact with God in our present experience. Not an experience of the past, but an experience in the present - - - actually genuine.

When we have that, witnessing to it is natural, just as we wish to share a beautiful sunset. We must be in such close touch with God that the whole sharing is guided. The person with a genuine experience of God and with no technique will make fewer mistakes than one with lots of technique, and no sense of God. Under guidance, you are almost a spectator of what is happening. Your sharing is not strained, it is not tense.

We must clearly see and understand our own experience and carefully articulate it, so as to be ready to know what to say or use parts of it, when the need comes to share with others, in order to help them.

Act only on prayer and under guidance. Prayer is real, and prepares the way for people.

Share with people - don't preach, don't argue. Don't talk up nor down to people. Talk to them, and share in terms of their own experiences, speak on their level.

Proceed with imagination and real faith - expect things to happen. If you EXPECT things to happen, they DO happen. This is based on FAITH IN GOD, not on our own strength. A negative attitude toward ourselves or others cuts off God's power; it is evidence of lack of faith in His power. If you go into a situation admitting defeat, of course you lose.@

[Comment: Those who are familiar with A.A.'s Big Book will quickly recognize the large number of ideas in the foregoing half-page of quotes that correspond to language Bill Wilson used in A.A.'s basic text. Thus on pages 18-19 of the Third Edition of A.A.'s Big Book, Bill talks presenting no "Holier Than Thou" attitude, nor lectures, but rather a sharing of experience. Bill even refers to a Bible expression in saying, "many take up their beds and walk again" (John 5:8: "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. "). See also, the Big Book's comments about being "beyond human aid" (p. 24). About "the loving and powerful hand of God" (p. 18). About contact with "that Power, which is God" (p. 46). About "consciousness of the Presence of God" (pp. 51, 63). About "All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God" (p. 68). About "We ask God what we should do about each specific matter" (p. 69) About "God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him."@ There are many more examples.]

THE FIVE C-S (From page 4, as numbered by GSO)

3. Conviction.

Try to bring a person to a decision to "surrender as much of himself as he knows to as much of God as he knows. Stay with him until he makes a decision and says it aloud.

4. Conversion.

This is the turning to God, the decision, the surrender.@

WHAT SURRENDER MEANS (From page 42, as numbered by GSO)

Surrender is a complete handing over of our wills to God, a reckless abandon of ourselves, all that we have, all that we think, that we are, everything we held dear, to God to do what he likes with. . .@

[Comment: Again, just look at the Big Book Third Edition: "We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon" (p. 59). "3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*."@ (p. 59)]

A(a) What are the conditions of receiving God's guidance? (From page 38, as numbered by

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GSO)

We must be in such relationship with God that He can guide us; He will not force Himself on us. The Sons of God are those who are guided by the Spirit of God. If we are wholly surrendered we can absolutely count on guidance. Constant renewal of consecration is necessary. Surrender is not an attitude attained; it is an attitude maintained. The major condition is being absolutely willing and looking for God's direction in all things. We cannot receive guidance if we hold back an area, an habit, a plan. We must be alert to His direction in Every thing; little things, as well as big ones such as career and marriage@

[Comment: Anne had her eye on passages in the Good Book that were familiar to our pioneer AAs. See 1 Corinthians 1:17-24; 2:9-16; 3:11, 16; 12:3-13; 2 Timothy 1:14; James 1:5-8; 1 John 2:27, 4:1-6, 13; 5:1-5].

A8. LET ALL YOUR READING BE GUIDED (From page 16, as numbered by GSO)

What does God want me to read? A newly surrendered person is like a convalescent after an operation. He needs a carefully balanced diet of nourishing and easily assimilated food. Reading is an essential part of the Christian's diet. It is important that he read that which can be assimilated and will be nourishing. If you do not know what books to read see some one who is surrendered and who is mature in the Groups. Biographies, or stories of changed lives are very helpful for the young Christian. *A Life Changers A* by Begbie; *A Children of the Second Birth@* Shoemaker; *A New Lives for Old,@* Reynolds; *A For Sinners Only,@* Russell; *ATwice Born Men,@* by Begbie, story of the Salvation Army in London Slums; *ATwice Born Ministers,@* Shoemaker; and others.

Books like, *A He That Cometh,@* Allen; *A Conversion of the Church,@* Shoemaker; all of E. Stanley Jones's books are very good. Some have found Fosdick's little books, *AThe Meaning of Prayer,@* and *AThe Manhood of the Master@* helpful. One should by all means read at least one book on the life of Christ a year for a while. More would be better. *AThe Life of Christ,@* Stalker; *A Jesus of Nazareth,@* Barton; *AThe Jesus of History,@* Glover; *AThe Man Christ Jesus,@* Speer, are all good. See your ministers for others if you desire. But get those biographies of the Master which bring out his humanity. An understanding of the Cross and its meaning for life is absolutely essential. The best popular interpretation I know is, *A If I be lifted Up,@* by Shoemaker. It is a group of lenten sermons. Christ ought to be as real to us as our nearest and best friend.

Of course the Bible ought to be the main Source Book of all. No day ought to pass without reading in it. Read until some passage comes that *A hits@* you. Then pause and meditate over its meaning for your life. Begin reading the Bible with the Book of Acts and follow up with the Gospels and then the Epistles of Paul. Let *AR Revelation@* alone for a while. The Psalms ought also

be read and the Prophets.@

[Comment: Early AAs read all these items. I found them in Dr. Bob's library (See Dick B., *Dr. Bob and His Library*). I found them in Henrietta Seiberling's reading (See Dick B., *The Akron Genesis of Alcoholics Anonymous* and *The Books Early AAs Read for Spiritual Growth*, 7th ed). I found them in Clarence Snyder's library as shown to me by his wife Grace in Florida (See Dick B., *That Amazing Grace* and *The Books Early AAs Read*, supra). And I found many mentioned in *DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers* and in early A.A. pamphlets and articles. Anne was the Bible student, the teacher, and the one who conducted the Morning Watch at the Smith home. It is therefore not surprising to see the language on page 87 of the Big Book, 3rd ed.: ¶There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.@ And when I see communications from people that say AA.A. is not for Christians *only*@ or Lois Wilson's remark that ¶not all drunks are Christians,@ or hear someone in a meeting talk about excluding all but Conference Approved books from meetings and discussions, I bemoan the lack of knowledge of our own history and of the Big Book itself that exists today. There is no index of forbidden books in Alcoholics Anonymous, and there never was one. Dr. Bob was an avowed Bible student, Christian, and member of Protestant churches. But he read, recommended, circulated, and studied the works of Roman Catholic writers, of Confucius, of ¶new thought@ writers like Trine and Fox, and the Bible itself. He went to Roman Catholic retreats, Bible and tooth brush in hand. And he seems never to have spoken ill of any religion or denomination¶An example today's AAs would do well to observe.]

¶Barriers to a full surrender. (From page 18, as numbered by GSO)

4. Is there anything I won't give up?
5. Is there an apology I won't make?
6. Is there any defeat in my whole life, I refuse to count as sin?
7. Any person I don't like to meet?
8. Any restitution I won't make?
9. Is there any guidance I have had but refused to follow?
10. Is there anything I won't share? Let my surrender be wholesale.
11. Narrow vision, rigidity, a staleness in your relationship with Christ.
12. Telling a lie.
13. If you are sore in yourself, do you work it off on somebody else.
14. Intellectual doubts arise out of an attitude of mind.
15. You can't ask forgiveness from someone you don't believe in.
16. Ideas about self - holding on to my own judgment of things, people, common sense and reason.
17. ¶You can't use a fine needle to do rough darning@¶ Are you willing to take any amount of trouble to win others that Christ has taken to win you?
18. Each confession a fresh humiliation breaks down another barrier. You can get to the place where you have nothing left to defend - that is release. You can go naked to God@

[Comment: There are hundreds of similar guides, observations, challenges, and ideas in Anne's 64 pages, plus those we still need to find. You can see many discussed in my title, *Anne Smith's Journal, 1933-1939*, 3rd ed. You will be surprised, as so many are each day, to see just how much of Anne's thinking and teaching underlies our fellowship ideas. And do you see any mention of **A**higher power,**@** or of **A**acceptance,**@** or of **A**things happen for a reason,**@** or **A**there are no coincidences in A.A.**@** Whatever you think of such expressions, they should certainly be balanced against an understanding of what some of us now **A**old school A.A.**@** Let's learn what we *were* and how successful we *were* before we start inventing new gods, new philosophies, and new interpretations of **A**reality.**@** The Big Book and the chatter in meetings, if not accompanied by our history, could be likened to a conversation with Thomas Jefferson without a knowledge of the Declaration of Independence.]

Our Great Opportunity Today

What a great and unusual day it could be in Twelve Step Fellowships if we actually saw a copy of *Anne Smith's Journal* **B**mine or hers**B** on the literature table at a meeting. What a great and unusual day if someone read just one page from the real, the original, the un-edited Anne Smith's Journal at an A.A. meeting on the 4th week of every month. What a great and unusual day if A. A. World Services started publishing the real history of early A.A. instead of the diverse opinions of thousands who haven't a clue where we came from. What an opportunity to change the failing treatment ideas to the early **A**Program**@** by just reading at a treatment program what that early program was, as exemplified by Anne's Journal. What a great and unusual day if speakers and International Conventions and other Conferences began talking about something other than their own experience, strength, and hope. One can read the Book of Acts, as Anne suggested, and see plenty of victorious experience, strength, and hope that was based on belief in, and reliance upon, the power of God. The lame walked. The dead were raised. The sick were healed. That's what early A.A. was really about. In fact, if you look at the 12 times the word **A**Creator**@** is used in our Big Book today, and if you realize that the word **A**God**@** with a capital **A**G**@** is set forth**B** by name or by explicit reference**B** over 400 times in today's Big Book, you might be hesitant about questioning the literature that gave rise to the very **A**Power**@** (the power of Almighty God, our Creator), Whose kindness, healing, and forgiveness put Alcoholics Anonymous on the map as a viable life-changing society that really had an answer to the **A**drug problem.**@**

END