

One Year Old!



By Roger C.

It all began with an uncivil act.

It was a thoughtless act without compassion or concern for the wellbeing of other women and men in the fellowship suffering from the same malady of alcoholism.

Intergroup booted two groups off the official Toronto area AA meeting list.

Thus was born this website.

At the time, the alcoholics at Beyond Belief, one of the ousted groups, were panicked. “Our group will die,” some feared. “The alcoholic who needs us will not be able to find us.” The long-time secretary of the group, David R, was sent out to purchase a domain name and launch a website, with the sole purpose of letting the newcomer to AA know the locations and times of the two groups’ meetings.

And so the website went up one year ago, on June 15, 2011.

Meanwhile, Roger C, who had taken over from David as the site administrator, was working on [A History of Agnostic Groups in AA](#). What he thought would take a weekend took three months. In spite of the help of people like Michelle Mirza, the chief archivist at the General Service Office in New York City, and AA historians Bill White and Ernest Kurtz, information about agnostic groups was almost impossible to find, with very, very little having been documented.

And that led to the thought that the website could be more than simply a notice of agnostic AA meetings in Toronto.

It could be a repository, an archive, of information about agnostics and agnostic groups in Alcoholics Anonymous. It could be about the experience, strength and hope of those who, like

Jim Burwell, uncomfortable with the “God bit,” yet make the rooms of AA their chosen home for recovery from the affliction of alcoholism.

And like *A History of Agnostic Groups in AA*, it would be for and about agnostics in AA in every part of the world, “a space for AA agnostics, atheists and freethinkers worldwide.”

So, that’s the “what happened” part. What’s it like now?

To date, forty-six articles have been published on this website, and these have been written, remarkably, by twenty-two different people. These writers are from two continents (Europe and North America), and over a dozen cities (London, England and Toronto, Canada through to New York and Minneapolis and Austin and Los Angeles, United States).

Let’s take a quick scan of just some of these posts:

The all-time most popular post on the website is [The “Don’t Tell” Policy in AA](#). Perhaps that’s because it picks up so ironically on the inherent conflict within AA between belief and non-belief and the explicit religiosity – the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, for example – of most AA meetings. This “inner contradiction” has been very well described in just one of the many well-researched posts on the website, [The Courts, AA and Religion](#).

There is lots of history here for the history buff. [AA in the 1930s: God as We Understood Him](#) is a good example. And there’s a biography of the first atheist in Alcoholics Anonymous to make a difference in terms of the accessibility of AA to all with a desire to quit drinking: [Jim Burwell](#). Last year also saw the death of the very first person to use “We Agnostics” as the name of a group in AA. Charlie P had 41 years of continuous sobriety when he died in February of this year at the age of 98. [Father of We Agnostics Dies](#) tells the story of this remarkable man, for whom an AA meeting was held at his bedside in the week before he died.

We occasionally cover good news! A group in Indianapolis had been booted off of the official regional AA list and when it was put back on it, we shared the news: [Indy We Agnostics Re-Listed](#). Happily, we also reported on a new group in Halifax, Nova Scotia, [The Only Requirement Group](#). We expect to post a similar story about a group about to be launched in Northern Ontario. We trust that our Page, [How to Start an AA Meeting](#), is a helping hand for those keen on doing service by starting a new group, agnostic or otherwise.

The website also features a number of book reviews. The first one we posted was [Waiting: A Nonbeliever’s Higher Power](#), by an atheist in AA, Marya Hornbacher. More recently, a [Literature Page](#) was added so that recovering alcoholics, and especially non-religious alcoholics, could readily find materials that might be helpful in recovery and sobriety.

Finally, we especially cherish the articles that deal with the experience, strength and hope of agnostics in AA. One of the best of these is [The Willow Tree Bark](#); if you haven’t read it yet, take a few minutes to do so soon. Share it with your group.

It was said earlier that *A History of Agnostic Groups in AA* was ultimately the inspiration for the role of this website. First posted on September 27, 2011, to this day it remains one of the site's most popular destinations.

And it ever reminds us of the following saying: "History is made by those who write it." To put it another way, unless something is written down, it never happened. It is certainly true to say that one of the very few ways a person could know that Don W started the first AA group for agnostics and atheists on January 7, 1975 in a Unitarian Church on Barry Street in Chicago is to read it, just as you have just done. People in AA will tell you the damndest things – for instance that you need to find God to stay sober – because they don't know any better. They haven't read about Don W and Charlie P or Ada H or Jim Burwell or...

They haven't found this website yet.

We're writing it all down.

So where do we go from here?

We want to become an even better online magazine, or "e-zine," over time. We are posting a brand new article now once a week and we will keep on doing that. We want people to be able to count on us not just for the very best posts but for publishing them in a reliable and regular fashion.

We also want to increase the "worldwide-ness" of the website.

We want always more writers, not less.

And we want to keep the website fresh, not stagnant. So we are always looking for ways to make it dynamic, to ensure that it is responding to the needs of the wonderful people from near and far who visit the website each and every day.

Those are our goals and commitments as we move forward. And what do we ask of you, our dear reader? Being hard-core AAers, even in this online world, we have but one sincere request of you, and that is to, please:

Keep coming back.

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