

## Harry Tiebout, M.D.

*This is the third and final article of Markings with profiles of psychologists and psychiatrists who were influential in the history and development of A.A. Its subject is Dr. Harry Tiebout, the first psychiatrist to openly support A.A. and its effective program of recovery from alcoholism.*

Harry Tiebout was born on January 2, 1896, in Brooklyn, New York. He received his bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University in 1917 and earned his doctorate from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. From 1922 to 1924, he worked at the Westchester Division of New York Hospital. After this, he worked in child guidance clinics in New York City, and starting in 1927 he joined the Institute for Child Guidance as a staff psychiatrist. Also at this time, he was on the staff of Cornell Medical School and the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic, and became the medical director of Blythewood Sanitarium in Greenwich, Connecticut.

In 1935 it was in this capacity that Dr. Tiebout was first exposed to Alcoholics Anonymous. In early 1939 he received a prepublication copy of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* for review. Reading it, he discovered that it offered a thoroughly accurate portrait of the character problems in an alcoholic patient under his care, Marty M. In order to determine its value, he lent the manuscript to Marty. She initially rejected the book and its mention of God, but prompted by Dr. Tiebout, she continued to read it. Ultimately, this book helped Marty to achieve sobriety, which convinced Dr. Tiebout of its merit. After this, he supported the A.A. program, becoming the first psychiatrist to endorse A.A. and refer his patients to the Fellowship.

Dr. Tiebout would help and contribute to A.A. for the remainder of his life, and became a close friend and supporter of Bill W. He purchased some stock in the Alcoholic Foundation to help finance the group when they were low on funds. When Bill W. experienced difficulties with depression in the 1940s, he sought and received psychiatric treatment from Dr. Tiebout. Additionally, Bill W. was able to talk before the New York State Medical Society in 1944 and the American Psychiatric Association in 1949 in part because of the influence of Dr. Tiebout. He served as a Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee on the General Service Board from 1957 until his death on April 2, 1966, helping A.A. develop during a time of growth and change.



At the 1955 International Convention in St. Louis, Dr. Tiebout spoke on the subject of A.A. and the Medical Profession, and he was also present at the 1960 International Convention in Long Beach, California.

At the same time, Dr. Tiebout remained active in his field, and continued to publish academic articles on A.A. and the treatment of alcoholism. His first such article, published in 1944 in *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, was titled “Therapeutic Mechanism of Alcoholics Anonymous.” This article served as an introduction to the A.A. program of recovery, and explained A.A. to the scientific and medical communities. It demonstrated the importance of ego reduction to the alcoholic, and made it clear that a religious awakening contributed to the recovery of the early A.A. members. The concept of “surrender” is repeatedly emphasized by Dr. Tiebout in this and other articles, meaning that the individual must become totally willing to accept their own powerlessness and the need for help from a greater power. However, Tiebout is careful to emphasize that the alcoholic must surrender fully, rather than simply comply with the wishes of a therapist. He believed that there could be no compromise with the ego, which could always reassert itself and lead to drinking once again.

Tiebout credited A.A. with addressing alcoholism directly as a problem in and of itself, rather than simply as an indicator of a deeper disorder. This maintained focus on the immediate problems that were experienced by the alcoholic, which could then be addressed. He also believed that referring to alcoholism as a disease was helpful in getting an alcoholic patient to seek and accept treatment, which may be avoided if their condition was only considered a personal or moral failing. It is important to note that these assertions were largely made before A.A. was as well-known and accepted as it is today, and that Dr. Tiebout put his professional reputation at risk by endorsing them. Because of this, Bill W. wrote a memorial article in the A.A. Grapevine about Harry Tiebout in July of 1966, calling him a “well-beloved friend,” and saying that, “his gifts of courageous example, deep perception of our needs, and constant labor in our behalf have been—and always will be—values quite beyond our reckoning.”



The G.S.O. Archives Department would like to extend to you and yours best wishes for a wonderful and safe holiday season. The following holiday message was originally sent to the New York Intergroup for their December 1956 Bulletin.

To all A.A. members in the Metropolitan Area:

The Christmas season is with us once again and it is a time when we of A.A. especially count our many blessings and offer our gratitude to God for what he has accomplished in each of our lives. For us, this is truly a season of rejoicing and thankfulness.

Though Lois and I will be away when you read these words, please know that our thoughts are with you and that we join you in these expressions of the Christmas spirit.

And to each one we send our very best wishes for a happy holiday and may the coming New Year prove to be among your very best.

Devotedly,  
Bill and Lois



## National A.A. Archives Workshop



The 18th National A.A. Archives Workshop (NAAAW) met October 9-12, in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. This location, approximately 90 miles from New York, gave the attendees the opportunity to visit the General Service Office Archives, many for the first time.

Perhaps it was no coincidence that this year the Workshop fell in October, National Archives Month.

With a theme of "Love and Service" 250 A.A.s attended; approximately three quarters were area archivists or archives committee members, others were either interested in service or A.A.



*Workshop on preservation*

history buffs. They came from far and wide: California, Maine, Canada and Australia.

Another highlight was a visit to Stepping Stones, the home of Bill W. and his wife Lois, in Bedford Hills, New York. Here workshop members were greeted by Sally C., Stepping Stones' director, and shown items rarely on display. Ron C., visiting from Australia, told the group about his tour of Stepping Stones, shortly after Lois's death, by Nell Wing, A.A.'s first archivist, and told personal stories of A.A. friends and pioneers whom he had known over his 50 years of sobriety.

Throughout the four days tools and techniques used to preserve A.A.'s history were shared through workshops and presentations. Other activities included a Red Ball Meeting, Sobriety Countdown and Longtimers Panel 50+.

G.S.O. archivist Michelle Mirza (nonalcoholic) gave a PowerPoint presentation on G.S.O.'s archives. Mitchell K., of Middletown, NY, gave the Keynote address. Mary R., wife of the first black Conference delegate, gave personal reflections on Lou R. Tony L., of Dublin, showed a video starring Conor F., who got sober in 1943 in Philadelphia, speaking of A.A.'s roots in Ireland and England. There were other presentations on A.A.'s early history in Philadelphia by Area 59's "Shakey Mike," Don H. and Chuck G. Philadelphia Intergroup's Brian Q. shared on Jack Alexander's *Saturday Evening Post* article on Alcoholics Anonymous.

The 19th National A.A. Archives Workshop will be held in Cleveland in 2015.

Anne Marie G.  
co-chair, NAAAW, 2014

## 75th Anniversary — South Orange Group.

The South Orange Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, at one time called the Jersey Group and the "mother group" of New Jersey, began as a meeting in Hank P.'s home in Montclair, New Jersey in the spring of 1939. Bill W. and Hank then established it as a public group that met at the South Orange Community Center starting in October 1939. The group meets every Sunday at 7:15 p.m. in the town center of South Orange and held a special weekend-long celebration of its 75th anniversary, November 28-30, 2014 at Our Lady of Sorrows Church (where regular A.A. meetings and General Service events are held). The weekend events, included 40 meetings, presentations and the show-



ing of the newly revised video, *Markings on the Journey*. Sunday evening a buffet dinner was held) at 5:00 p.m., followed by the regular speaker meeting at 7:15. Speakers were Susan U. of the 79th Street Workshop, New York City, and Billy N., Design for Living Group, in Neptune, N.J.

## Celebrating 68 Years of A.A. in Muncie, Indiana

Muncie (Delaware County) was celebrating 68 years of Alcoholics Anonymous. The event was held September 20 in Mansfield Park, which has some local history for us. The Park is operated by the Center Township Trustees, but it is named after Virgil M., the contact for the 1950 Inter-County Group, the first A.A. group in this county.

We all pitched in to make this celebration a success. Hamburgers and Hot Dogs were provided by our districts. The Archive Display was the work of our committee and research of the New York G.S.O. Archives, the result of my 2006 visit. The PowerPoint information we got from our friend Arthur S. from Texas; we added the Indiana history to his timeline history of A.A. Our Area 22 delegate Bill R. was the main speaker. I gave a brief history of the local group before his talk.



Bruce C.

Area 22, Archives chairperson

## Cleveland's Borton Group — 75th Anniversary

In May 1939 Clarence S., a Cleveland A.A. member, placed patent attorney Al "Abby" G. into rehab in Akron under the care of Dr. Bob S. He then approached Abby's wife about starting a group in their Cleveland Heights home. How could she refuse?

That fall Clarence smuggled freelance reporter Elrick Davis into meetings of that first Greater Cleveland group and Mr. Davis wrote a series of articles on A.A. which were published in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. This resulted in over 500 calls for help to be tended by the only 13 active members.

Shortly thereafter Clarence's minister, Rev. Dilworth Lipton of the First Unitarian Church, wrote and delivered a widely publicized sermon titled "Mr. X and Alcoholics Anonymous." Clarence was Mr. X. The sermon detailed the principles of A.A., pointing out that they have much in common with all religions, not just the Christian Oxford Group of our roots.

Many members were upset by this workload and by the surptitious manner in which it was done. So they voted Clarence

out of A.A. (which was something that could be done at the time). A nonalcoholic named Tom Borton had an alcoholic employee helped by A.A. and Mr. Borton was so impressed he offered his home for their meetings. The Borton Group first met on Nov. 16, 1939 and has moved several times before settling down at Forest Hill Church in Cleveland Heights, across the street from the Rockefeller's summer estate. This year it celebrates its 75th anniversary.

Bob McK.

## New G.S.O. Archives Traveling Exhibit



The G.S.O. Archives recently received the newly completed traveling exhibit. Composed of two banner-like displays, it shows the history of the A.A. Fellowship and explains the work and value of archives. It will be available in the beginning of 2015. Get in touch with us if you would like this exhibit for your next A.A. event. Call (212) 870-3400, or email [archives@aa.org](mailto:archives@aa.org).

## Revised Archives Workbook

The newest edition of the Archives Workbook is now available. It features seven new Shared Experiences on the topic of Digital Archives. It is currently available only in English; however, it is being translated into French and Spanish. The Workbook can be found online at A.A.'s website [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org), or through the Order Entry Department. They can be reached at 212-870-3400 or email [orders@aa.org](mailto:orders@aa.org). (M-44i; \$2.50)

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