

# The DIALOG

A PUBLICATION OF THE DALLAS INTERGROUP ASSOCIATION (est. 1947)



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Welcome to the DIALOG — your newsletter for the Dallas Intergroup Association

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## Events

**CityWide is Back** - every 2nd Saturday of the month.

**Southeast Woman to Woman Virtual Conference** - August 20 - August 21

**North Texas Roundup (In-person!)** - August 20 - August 22

**45th Annual Hill Country Roundup** - August 20 - August 22

**Miracles at Lake Murray Conference** - September 10 - September 12

**Lakeside Conference in Brownwood, Texas** - September 24 - September 26

**74th Anniversary of the Dallas Intergroup** - September 25 @ 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm



Photo from Lois' "Gallery" at Stepping Stones showing Lois, Stepping Stones Foundation President, at the 1981 unveiling in Washington DC of a Postage Stamp. Lois' vision for the Foundation included building public awareness of alcoholism prevention and recovery.

## A bit of History for you:

A special issue postage stamp with the theme "Alcoholism - You can beat it!" was issued August 19, 1981, in Washington, DC. The special issue stamp was designed by John Boyd of New York, New York, and modeled by V. Jack Ruther.

The 18-cent stamp conveyed the message that alcoholism is a treatable disease. This was supported by the fact that, at the time that the stamp was issued, there were over nine million recovered alcoholics in the United States.

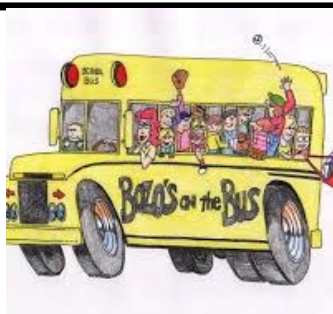
## Easy explanation of the steps:

**Step 1 to 3 - GIVING UP**

**Step 4 & 5 - FESSING UP**

**Step 6 to 9 - CLEANING UP**

**Step 10 to 12 - STEPPING UP**



## What Happens:

- Mess to Messenger
- Hurting to Helping
- Partying to Praying
- Fighting to Forgiving
- Cold to Compassion
- Bitter to Brotherly Love



**“Somewhere in the midst of the stories, the sadness, the laughter, and the hope, I knew ”...**

Welcome to the **DIAlog**

## Just Like Me but Different

To start with, it has to be said that the groups in Bwindi, Uganda are really only AA in name, and may never be able to be true Alcoholics Anonymous groups in a traditional sense.

“The meetings are certainly effective in helping people to maintain their abstinence, but they don’t really follow the 12-Step approach in any formal way. And because the members often all come from the same small settlement there is no anonymity”

So informed by a resident doctor at the Bwindi Community Hospital, when I asked how AA meetings started in a out of the way region that is over 8 hours from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda.

Somehow, this reminded me of how AA started in the beginning before traditions were in place or the Big Book of AA was written: a group of drunks getting together to share their experience, strength, and hope:

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Yes, I did not know what to expect when I walked in to the little shack with the tin roof in the southwestern corner of Uganda. The people were black, pygmies with short stature, barefoot with humble clothing. No cars waited in the parking lot; people spoke a language I did not understand. These are the peoples, according to the World Health Organization, who live in extreme poverty. Like many other indigenous cultures, they are being devastated by alcoholism.

They are called the Batwa, forest dwellers. They had been hunters and gatherers who were forced from their forest homes when the endangered mountain gorillas needed protection and the forest was designated a safe haven as a National Park.

Decades ago, I did not know what to expect when I walked into my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. The people looked like me, white, well dressed, perhaps, several of them were scared, like me. We had something in common – we all drank too much alcohol and it was destroying our lives. People told stories: some funny in a very tragic way, and others just had to be fiction. I couldn’t believe anyone would ever be that honest in a roomful of people. Many included the makings of an interesting memoir: adventure combined with drama, then mingled with fiction and humor.

*Continued on page 4.*



## MY FIRST TWELFTH-STEPPER

**My first contact with AA** was in Ohio, in an alcoholic treatment center that was a unit of St. Vincents Hospital, Cleveland. It was called Rosary Hall, and was founded and managed by the best twelfth-stepper, I've ever known:

Sister Ignatia, of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine.

This incredible human dynamo seemed to be everywhere at once.

Totally blacked out upon my arrival, I clearly remember but one thing:

I was groggily sitting on my bed when Sister Ignatia arrived carrying a glass with two ounces of whiskey.

She said, "Drink this down while I watch. I want no DT's around here." The same dose of whiskey was given me that evening; on the second day I got only one ounce A.M. and one ounce P.M.

No more after that. The whiskey stock was kept locked in Sister's private room. Only she personally dispensed whiskey.

Every patient was made to feel "special" by Sister Ignatia. It was her talent.

Early on the third day, a man in a seeming coma was wheeled into my room and strapped onto a bed near mine. His breathing was labored, his face bright red, and he exuded feverish heat.

The word quickly spread — his name was Ed and he had been detoxed here several times before. Doctors and nurses scurried about, but Sister Ignatia ministered to Ed throughout the day.

In the evening, she sat down near Ed's bed with her rosary beads, and prayed, talking softly to him occasionally, sometimes wiping away tears. Sister sat there most of the night. Her compassion was real, and open for all to see.

On the day of my departure, she talked to me one-on-one. She gave me a St. Christopher medal (no AA medallions yet) and said, "Before you take a drink, Bill, bring this back to me personally." Sadly, I wasn't ready yet. I sheepishly mailed it back.

**AA Comes of Age** reports that in Akron's St. Thomas Hospital, Sister Ignatia and Doctor Bob — working together — treated over 5,000 alcoholics from 1939 to 1950.

Then she opened Cleveland's Rosary Hall, where it was my honor to know her for 5 days and nights.

Bill W called Sister Ignatia "incomparable" and "indefatigable." To me she is also "unforgettable."

*Bill K - Dallas, TX*



***She said, "Drink this down while I watch. I want no DT's around here."***



Dr. Bob comes down and says, "I've got good news and bad news. Good news is I got him down to twelve, the bad news is Direct Amends is still in."

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Welcome to the  
**DIAlog**



## CALLING ALL WRITERS...

Got something to Say?  
Send it to us or call  
214-316-1656

Tell us about EVENTS  
coming up at your  
HOME GROUP

Email  
[DiAlog@aadallas.org](mailto:DiAlog@aadallas.org)

*Continued from page 2, "Just Like Me but Different"*

Did I mention that there were several luxury cars in the parking lot of what is still my home group? This seemed important to me at the time. Such an odd memory to store for what was the beginning of my lifetime adventure.

Somewhere in the midst of the stories, the sadness, the laughter, and the hope, I knew I had found a home. My heart was stirred and my soul's yearning for something I did not know, the odyssey of spiritual seeking seasoned with an abundance of gratitude was born. This pilgrimage has led to many AA meetings all over the world for over 32 years.

Once again, I did not know what to expect in this faraway place of Bwindi, Uganda. The Batwa had just started to have AA meetings several months before my arrival, so this was new to them and new to me. Through the English-speaking translator, I understood that several young men have come from the Congo. The border crossing is close by, and a Congolese Batwa is easily absorbed into the existing tribe.

Both men and women shared their stories; how one man's family would leave the hut when he came home drunk. His wife and children would sleep outside, with mosquitoes. Despite the danger of being robbed or hurt, it was safer for them to be outside the hut when he was so drunk. As the translator shared the man's story, although I did not understand the words, I recognized the pain of shame and sadness in his voice. Now he is hoping to find a way to stop.

One after another, men and women shared stories of despair. For the younger men, they could not work because they were too drunk most of the time. For the woman sitting in the hut, the stories usually involved their children and then the sadness was immense for all of us. A mother, too drunk to get home one night, had to sleep by the side of the road with her young daughters, begging her children to lie to their father when they returned to the village in the morning.

An incentive used to maintain attendance at the meetings, is a "Bataka" style savings fund. People put a small amount of money in a fund at each meeting, then once a month one member is able to take the fund to use the money towards something for their home or business. It can be a solar panel, a new goat shed or portable radio. This is not how we practice AA in other parts of the world. No, it is not the way we do things at home.

Do the same rules apply as I sit in this hut? In this remote region of the world that has known such helplessness and neglect, perhaps, I am here to participate in this glimmer of hope. As I witness the seeds of self-sufficiency and the humble beginnings of self worth, I understand that a deep part of me is being changed also.

Yes, I did not know what to expect, I was hoping perhaps I could help them with my many years of experience. But once again, I received the gifts of acceptance, hope, and the realization that we are the same even though we live in worlds far apart.

Most importantly, that our lives have become better because we stopped drinking. Together, our hearts in this distant land are the same. I realize I am with family.

(Kathleen CH—visited Bwindi, Uganda in October 2015)



**A Super Special, Thank You!** To Kathleen CH for this month's content!

*Without her, this News Letter would not have happened.*