

February 8, 1947

TO: Bill Wilson

Luis Albern	Barney Heller	Clarence O'Brian
Ham Bigalow	Fred He*arter	Frank Sch*auss
Pete Cunningham	Johnny Howe	Hal Silverton
Doc Gould	Mort Joseph	Cliff Welker
"Doc" Haley	Al M*rin**u	Editor, The Eye Opener

This is just one of those rambling "remembering when" things. If most of you think I'm off my rocker for writing this, that's O.K., because where else but in A.A. could I do odd things without fear of finger pointing? It's a "first among ye cast the first stone" deal, isn't it?

Third time's the charm. I first heard about A.A. through Andy in 1937 --- remember, Bill? The Book hadn't been published yet. But I was sure Ty wouldn't "go" for it. Smart guy I was --- I didn't even tell him, just because God was involved. Then we telephoned you in 1938, Bill --- but Ty wasn't "ready". Then in April 1939 came to us in East Los Angeles a mimeographed copy of the Book. Did you keep that hysterical and (I fear) dramatic telegram I sent --- and the follow-up? I should never forget the utter despair that filled me at your reply: "There is a group in Akron, Ohio". Ohio: where Ty was facing commitment for life if I returned him and left him. Well --- that ended right --- with Ty in A.A. But I remember that though I couldn't believe you were alcoholics --- you and Bob and Hank and Marty, I still said that when I returned to L.A. that I'd be glad to tell anyone who was as desperate as I had been that I'd seen 100 of you who said you'd been alcoholics and that I knew you were decent members of society now. But I got on an A.A. jag on the boat coming back to L.A. Remember Pat Cooper and how he got sober on the advance sheets of the Book --- his story "Lone Endeavor" was in the first edition. I looked him up as you asked me to, Bill. I know he slipped and went East --- but at long last he is again trying A.A. He may make it this time. You sent me contact, Bill, but there aren't enough of them, so I asked Alma Whitaker of the Times to help --- and she did.

From June 1939 to into November and nothing definite accomplished --- then our great and wonderful break: On December 1st, 1939 I was sent to Johnny Howe, who was then Psychopathic Probation Officer of L.A. County. He devoured the Book and turned over to help A.A. all the vast resources of L.A. County. He and that wonderful Mrs. Dodge: Then almost the same day came the letter from Ruth Hock, New York office's secretary, telling that Lee Thorndyke was coming to L.A. Here was opportunity --- a real live member of A.A. coming here! We chose December 19th as the date and I wrote to everyone who'd contacted me, and on that date in my little house on B*n*cia in West Los Angeles the following met: Lee and Chuck Thorndyke, Barney and Ethel Heller, Chauncey and Edna Cuncy, Dwight Satterice and his sister, Joey and Mrs. Sullivan, three non-alcoholic women, Johnny Howe and me: Do you still have that telegram I sent in such triumph! "Los Angeles held its first meeting tonight. Fifteen present." Two meetings at my house, then we moved to Barney Heller's in Glendale, then back to my house on Go*er in Hollywood in February, 1940. We alternated between Barney and Ethel's house and mine. By then Hal and Natelle Silverton had joined us. (January 18, 1940) What a terrific thing you did in starting the San Diego group in the jail, Hal and in starting the groups in Lincoln Heights. From December 19, 1939 to the present time, Barney has never let a week go by without at least one meeting attended. Clarence McFadden joined us in early February or into January, 1940, and though he was a bartender, never so much as sniffed at a drink from that time on. All unbeknownst to us, another grand member had been born. Mort Joseph got sober in Palm Springs between Christmas and New Years of 1939. It was in early April, 1940

you telephoned me, Mort, wasn't it? You said you had tried to start a group in Denver and hadn't had too much success and had decided to come back to L.A. and had gotten my name and address from Bill. I treasured for years the florist card on which you said: "For your graciousness, your friendship and unfailing hospitality", and the postscript you wrote on one of those letters I sent week and sometimes daily to Bill, reporting progress: "What this country needs is not a good five cent cigar, but more hayes". Is that still on file, Bill? I blessed my secretarial training for those carbon copies I kept, so I could track our progress. In February Lee started the group that became the Pasadena Home Group. One very illustrious early member of that group was "Doc" Haley --- he led the downtown beginners group for years. Then she went to San Francisco. Now I hear she's in Florida. Los Angeles will always be grateful to Lee for her untiring efforts for us here. It was she who got the City Mother of the Examiner to give us a break, and it was she who got Ted Le Berthon's publicity for us. Bill Broughton came to us in about March of 1940 and what a God-send he was. Sober --- a member of the Chicago Group --- wonderfully steady. How he helped us in those trying early days. Then he, too, went to San Francisco. Frank Clark joined us while we were meeting in the house we'd rented as a clubhouse on Crescent Heights in 1940 (either in March or April). What a relief it was to be able to be sure the group was in you capable hands, Mort, when I went back to Honolulu in 1940, and what a splendid job you did in building up the group and laying the foundation for all the many groups here in Los Angeles area. L.A. will never forget Frank Randall and the wonderful work he and you did working together. I don't know exactly when Frank came in, but it was after May 5, 1940.

Now that I am again faced with leaving Southern California A.A., I desperately want to straighten up any misunderstanding. Joy Sullivan is the oldest member in point of sobriety in L.A., but he hasn't been to a meeting since April or May of 1940. Barney Heller was at the first meeting, too, but he had a little trouble at first. Hal Silverton is the oldest member who stayed sober and came to meetings starting January 18, 1940. Mort Joseph was sober three weeks before Hal, but didn't come to a meeting in L.A. until about April (1940). Bill's office would have the exact date. That original gang was the foundation of the group now known as the "Mother Group". They outgrew our homes and rented space at the Cecil Hotel, from there they progressed --- when I was here in March of 1941 they met at the Elk's Temple.

A.A. in Southern California is so pure and unadulterated, don't spoil it EVER. If there MUST be any glory attached to A.A., let it rest equally on Barney, Hal and Mort, and on all those people who tried so valiantly in those early days --- and Bill Price, Wally King, Owen Fallon --- A.A. is too big for petty squabbles. The truth is bound to come out. What does it matter who was first? We've pioneered so many things here in L.A. --- all men and all women groups, colored groups and non-alcoholic groups. If they exist in the Rest, I couldn't find them in Chicago or Washington, D.C.

I shall always remember Bill Wilson's words to me: "Though I am proud to have been an early member of Alcoholic's Anonymous, I'd still sell my title as "Founder" for \$1.98". That's true humility, and if it's good enough for Bill, it's good enough for me.

Kaye Miller