

TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends on N.A. Unity.

Maintainence of recovery is based on a spiritual foundation whose main aspect is service to others. Haphazard methods can bring no lasting results. Lack of a unified group purpose for our common welfare could soon end in individual effort with self-seeking reward as its goal. Our experience and observations have pointed to this grave defect in the past. It is not our policy to try to ameliorate this condition by rules or regulations, (We could not enforce them anyway) but to show the desireability of group effort, and its healing influence through unity of purpose at both the personal and group levels. There is not the slightest indication in our policy of authoritarian control or a powerful hierarchy; we have no need of either. Knowing our type of personality it might be feared that our society would become a form of anarchy. In anarchy self-determination is license not liberty, we know this destructive force from the past and all the problems it presents. In anarchy there would be no real freedom and without freedom no recovery, one is the foundation for the other. Responsibility as a corollary of freedom is the cohesive constructive force that eliminates self-willed anarchy.

There are two aspects of our past that makes a new approach imperative, they are stronger than any rule or law that we might lay down for ourselves.

- #1 The progressive destructive pattern of an unmanageable life, controlled by drugs.
- #2 The inability to form satisfactory relationships with other human beings which results in lasting happiness of any kind.

In setting ourselves to a common purpose and action, we are willing to submerge our own personal wishes and desires so that others may be given a better opportunity to recover. In practicing our personal programs we become more aware of our impulsive and addictive nature. Through the living problems and difficulties we encounter, we realize the deep need to surrender to spiritual principles. Unseen principles are the roots of our society, stronger than any visible power; our seen leadership rotates and is the servant of our fellowship. The invisible power is the real ruler of our actions.

If we do not alter or modify our thinking and actions in accord to these, we again face total destruction; here the decision is ours alone to make. When we honestly face this alternative, make our decision and find a more desireable way of life we realize that to keep what we have, we must share it by offering it to others.

Since no man can be truly free alone but only in some kind of fellowship, group activity becomes a necessity. Lone ego-centric activity, seldom if ever removes the bars that imprison us. We need something and somebody else to care about in order to find balance. Fellowship provides both. We inspire and are inspired by group efforts and common goals. Unity springs and grows in this kind of action.

Spontaneity in freedom we should encourage at all levels in our society. Let what restrictions we ask of ourselves be in this spirit, guided by our individual and group conscience. We can withstand any pressures from without or within if we remain realistically flexible. Only in responsible freedom can we grow to maturity. Any rules or restrictions imposed by others will only limit our usefulness and bring about rigidity in our attitudes. This we should try to avoid for our common welfare.

Time and time again history has revealed mistakes and weaknesses, from which mankind as a whole has drawn few lasting lessons. If they have learned so little from the authoritarian organizations and governments that comprise their societies that they perpetuate their errors, then what, we might ask, are our chances for survival? Our answer is really simple, we are guided neither by their rules nor their goals. Our Steps and Traditions are means to a different end.

Self-seeking, power hungry, prestige collecting, status conscious, wealth accumulating humanity has another side we have either seen or heard about. It is not as well publicised perhaps or as well thought of, but it is always there between the lines of history.

When disaster strikes in its myriad forms, we will always find men and women who will, in the face of calamity and distress, give comfort, solace and help to each other; they will give freely of whatever they have to each other. Recently we saw this, when tragedy, at the hands of an assassin, struck down a wealthy young presidential candidate. A Mexican American porter cradled the bleeding head above the floor in his right hand, with his left he gave a prized possession, his crucifix, to the dying Robert F. Kennedy. No rewards sought, no prestige hoped for. In the adjoining hall, people from all economic backgrounds, religious affiliations and racial sources, clasped each others hands and exchanged tears of grief on each others shoulders. Honest emotion, the remover of barriers; a goal to be sought. We know this basic need for another human being from the depths of our own fear and isolation. Here is the area for our answers, not the weakness of one, but the strength of many acting according to their inherent nature; a coming together in honest and decent emotion.

An old story of service and love for another is told regarding the starving beggar in old China. This man crawled to the door of a rude hut where lived an old man and woman. In all the world they had only enough rice left for that day. The wife looked to the husband for an answer, he said, "If we give him our rice we may die tomorrow" she replied, "If we don't, he will die today".

What are we willing to give or give up that will have meaning in life or living? Our pride of self in accomplishment? Our bias that says I'm different? Our closed mind that says, Mine is the right and only way? Are we willing to give others the right to their voice and opinion and see if experience proves them one way or the other? Are we willing to try new ideas wholeheartedly? Are we willing to apply to others and the group, the same tolerance and patience we show ourselves when we fall short of our personal ideals? Are we willing to do in concerted effort what we cannot do alone? When things do not go well, even when we have tried well, do we scatter to lick our wounds and nurse our grudges, or can we pick up the pieces and with more understanding build in a better way?

We are neither saints nor geniuses, but if we pool those talents we all do possess, great and small, we can change the course of our history and the lives of many we have yet to meet.

Without a dream a man is only half a man, without a vision a fellowship is a farce, with both all things are possible.