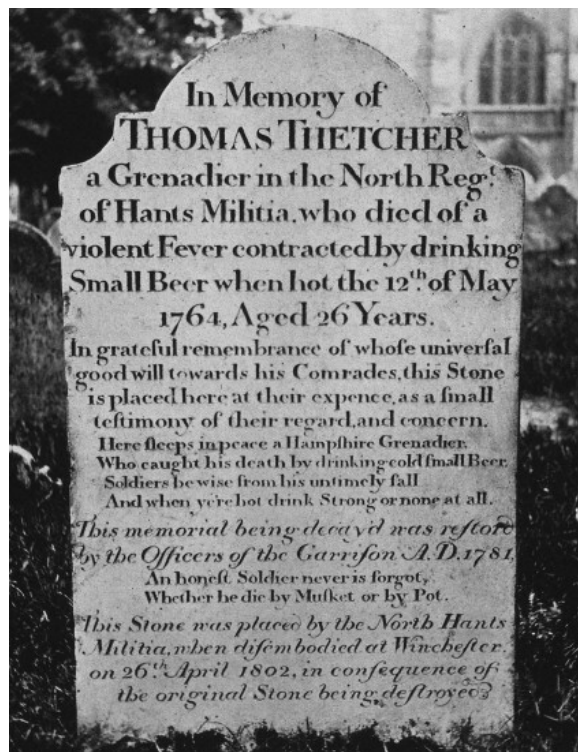


A.A. LITERATURE REFERENCES

These articles refer to people & sayings mentioned in A.A. literature and are offered here just for fun.

Our cofounder Bill W. served in World War I in 1918. In our Big Book, he relates a story about seeing an old tombstone: "We landed in England. I visited Winchester Cathedral. Much moved, I wandered outside. My attention was caught by a doggerel on an old tombstone:" (Bill W. ~ BB pg 1). Here is a photo of that tombstone with the full text copied below.

(A "Grenadier" is a soldier armed with grenades or a grenade launcher.)



In Memory of

THOMAS THETCHER

a Grenadier in the North Reg. of Hants Militia, who died of a violent Fever contracted by drinking Small Beer when hot the 12th of May 1764, Aged 26 Years.

In grateful remembrance of whose universal good will towards his Comrades, this Stone is placed here at their expence, as a small testimony of their regard and concern.

**Here sleeps in peace a Hampshire Grenadier,
Who caught his death by drinking cold small Beer,
Soldiers be wise from his untimely fall
And when ye're hot drink Strong or none at all.**

This memorial being decay'd was restor'd
by the Officers of the Garrison A.D. 1781.

**An Honest Soldier never is forgot
Whether he die by Musket or by Pot.**

The Stone was replaced by the North Hants Militia when disembodied at Winchester, on 26th April 1802, in consequence of the original Stone being destroyed.

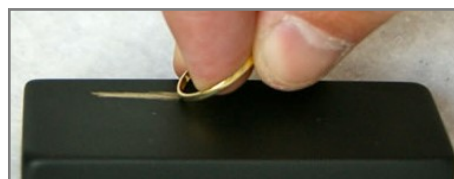
Who is John Barleycorn?

John Barleycorn (BB pgs 209-210, 12+12 pgs 24 & 30) is a British folksong. The character of John Barleycorn in the song is a personification of barley and of the alcoholic beverages made from it, beer and whisky. Many versions of the song have been recorded, most notably by Traffic, who included an arrangement called "John Barleycorn (Must Die)" on the 1970 album *John Barleycorn Must Die*. Author Jack London (*The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*) gave the title *John Barleycorn* to his 1913 autobiographical novel that tells of his struggle with alcoholism.

"...pain is the touchstone..." So what's a Touchstone?

"Someone who knew what he was talking about once remarked that pain was the **touchstone** of all spiritual progress." ~12&12 pg 93

A "touchstone" is an actual stone. In the late 15th century, gold and silver was rubbed, or touched against black quartz — the touchstone — to determine the purity of the metals. This was done by looking at the color of the streaks left on the stone. This is why a touchstone, in the figurative sense as it is used today, is a measuring tool. A standard or benchmark by which something is judged or recognized.



A gold ring being rubbed on a touchstone.

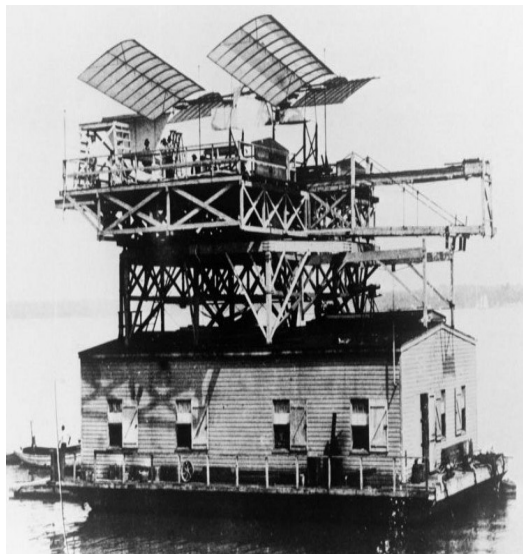
*“Did not **Professor Langley’s** flying machine go to the bottom of the Potomac River?” ~BB p 51.*

So who was Professor Langley? Samuel Pierpont Langley (1834-1906) was an American astronomer and pioneer of aviation. He was a professor of mathematics at the United States Naval Academy, a professor of astronomy at the Western University of Pennsylvania, and a Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

Langley attempted to make piloted heavier-than-air flying machines. His unpowered models flew, but his two attempts at piloted flight were not successful. His aircraft models were driven by miniature flash-boiler engines.

His first success came in May of 1896 when an unpowered model flew nearly 3/4 of a mile (~4,000 feet); this distance was ten times longer than any previous experiment with a heavier-than-air flying machine. His next model flew more than 5,000 feet. Both models were launched from a boat-mounted catapult in the Potomac River. Both flying machines landed and sunk in the Potomac. The Potomac River forms part of the borders between Maryland & Washington, D.C. on the left descending bank and West Virginia & Virginia on the river's right descending bank.

Professor Langley was in competition with the Wright Brothers, but they won the air race with a piloted aircraft flown Dec 17, 1903. The United States Navy's 1st aircraft carrier was the USS Langley, commissioned in 1922.



Boat-Mounted Flying Machine Catapult



USS Langley, commissioned in 1922

Who was Walter Hagen?

“In 1929 I contracted golf fever. We went at once to the country, my wife to applaud while I started out to overtake Walter Hagen. Liquor caught up with me much faster than I came up behind Walter.” ~Bill’s Story, Big Book page 3.

Walter Charles Hagen (1892–1969) was an American professional golfer in the first half of the 20th century. His tally of 11 professional Majors is third behind Jack Nicklaus (18) and Tiger Woods (14). In 1922 Hagen became the first native-born American to win the British Open. He also won the PGA Championship a record-tying five times. Hagen totaled 45 PGA wins in his career. Hagen was a dashing and assertive character. He was known for his stylish wardrobe while playing; this featured expensive tailored clothes in bright colors and plush fabrics. He was the first celebrity golfer.

“SHOEMAKER, stick to thy last!”

“SHOEMAKER, stick to thy last!”... better do one thing supremely well than many badly. ~12&12 p 150

“SHOEMAKER, stick to thy last!” is a saying attributed to Apelles of Kos, a Greek artist, 4th century BC. He made this comment to a shoemaker who presumed to criticize his paintings. A “last” is a mechanical form that has the shape of a human foot. It’s used by shoemakers when making and repairing shoes.

The saying can be taken to mean that a shoemaker ought not to judge beyond his own soles. That is to say, critics should only comment on things they know something about.

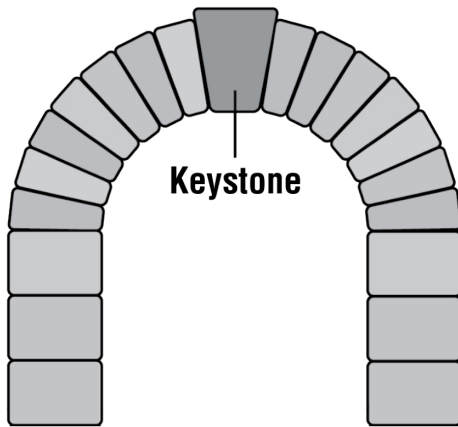
“Ultracrepidarian” [uhl-truh-krep-i-DAYR-ee-uhn] is an adjective used to describe people that have a habit of giving opinions and advice on matters outside of one's knowledge. It pertains to a person who criticizes, judges, or gives advice outside the area of his or her expertise. (I’ve never met anyone like that in A.A.!) Alternate versions: “Shoemaker, to your shoes.” - “Cobbler, stick to your last.”



A “Last”

What is a Keystone?

Definition: A **keystone** is the wedge-shaped stone at the apex of a masonry **arch**. It is the final piece placed during construction and locks all the stones into position, allowing the **arch** to bear weight.



Big Book page 62: This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the **keystone** of the new and triumphant **arch** through which we passed to freedom.

Big Book page 75: ...we are building an **arch** through which we shall walk a free man at last.

But even **Bacchus** boomeranged on us; we were finally struck down and left in terrified loneliness. ~12&12 pg 57

Bacchus was the Roman god of agriculture, wine and fertility copied from the Greek god **Dionysus**. He was the last god to join the twelve Olympians. His plants were vines and twirling ivy.



Statue of Dionysus
in Remich Luxembourg



Is this where "Think - Think - Think" came from?

This is from the book *Living Sober*, chapter 10:
Now we have learned that simply postponing that first drink, putting something else in its place, provides us with a chance to **think** about our drinking history, to **think** about the disease of alcoholism, and to **think** about the probable results of starting to drink.

Napoleon, Elba, and St. Helena

"Next morning I telephoned a friend in Montreal. He had plenty of money left and thought I had better go to Canada. By the following spring we were living in our accustomed style. **I felt like Napoleon returning from Elba. No St. Helena for me!** But drinking caught up with me again and my generous friend had to let me go. This time we stayed broke."

~BILL'S STORY, BB pg 4 [bolding by editor]

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) was a French statesman and military leader. He was Emperor of France from 1804 until 1814, and again in 1815. During his reign, he built a large empire that ruled over continental Europe and led many decisive battles throughout Europe, Austria, Russia and Egypt. But in the spring of 1814, the British Allies invaded France, captured Paris, and exiled Napoleon to the island of **Elba** off the coast of Italy. However, he escaped from **Elba** in February 1815 and took control of France once again. The Allies finally defeated him at the Battle of Waterloo later that year. He was then exiled to the remote island of **Saint Helena** in the South Atlantic, far off the coast of Africa, where he died six years later at the age of 51. **Napoleon** is considered one of the greatest commanders and most controversial leaders in human history.

Who was Eddie Rickenbacker and how did he set an example for Tradition One?

The first two paragraphs below are in the 12 & 12, Tradition One, pg 131:

Countless times, in as many cities and hamlets, we reenacted the story of **Eddie Rickenbacker** and his courageous company when their plane crashed in the Pacific. Like us, they had suddenly found themselves saved from death, but still floating upon a perilous sea. How well they saw that their common welfare came first. None might become selfish of water or bread. Each needed to consider the others, and in abiding faith they knew they must find their real strength. And this they did find, in measure to transcend all the defects of their frail craft, every test of uncertainty, pain, fear, and despair, and even the death of one.

Thus has it been with A.A. By faith and by works we have been able to build upon the lessons of an incredible experience. They live today in the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, which—God willing—shall sustain us in unity for so long as He may need us.

Edward (Eddie) Vernon Rickenbacker (October 8, 1890 – July 23, 1973) was an American fighter ace in World War I and Medal of Honor recipient. With 26 aerial victories, he was America's most successful fighter ace in the war. He was also considered to have received the most awards for valor by an American during the war.

One of Rickenbacker's most famous near-death experiences occurred in October 1942. Rickenbacker was provided an older B-17D Flying Fortress as transportation to the South Pacific. The bomber, (with a crew of eight) strayed hundreds of miles off course and was forced to ditch in a remote and little-traveled part of the Central Pacific Ocean close to Japanese-held islands. Rickenbacker and his crew were adrift on the ocean for thousands of miles.

For 24 days, Rickenbacker and seven crewmen drifted in life rafts at sea. Their food supply ran out after three days. Then, on the eighth day, a seagull landed on Rickenbacker's head. He warily and cautiously captured it, and then the survivors meticulously divided it into equal parts and used part of it for fishing bait. They lived on sporadic rain water that fell and similar food "miracles", like small fish that they caught with their bare hands.

Rickenbacker assumed leadership, encouraging the others to keep their spirits up. The U.S. Army and Navy planned to abandon the search for the lost B-17 crewmen after just over two weeks, but Rickenbacker's wife persuaded them to extend it another week. The services agreed to do so even though newspapers and radio broadcasts reported that Rickenbacker was dead.

One of the crewmen died during their ordeal; the other seven, including Rickenbacker, were rescued on day 24.

The story of Rickenbacker's ordeal was used as an example for Alcoholics Anonymous when the first of our Twelve Traditions was formulated: "Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends upon AA unity."

Between Scylla and Charybdis

The first paragraph below is in the Big Book, Doctor Bob's Nightmare, pgs 174-175:

By this time I was beginning to pay very dearly physically and, in hope of relief, voluntarily incarcerated myself at least a dozen times in one of the local sanitariums. I was **between Scylla and Charybdis** now, because if I did not drink my stomach tortured me, and if I did my nerves did the same thing. After three years of this, I wound up in the local hospital where they attempted to help me, but I would get my friends to smuggle me a quart, or I would steal the alcohol about the building, so that I got rapidly worse.

Being "between Scylla and Charybdis" is an idiom meaning "having to choose between two evils". Other idioms, such as "between the devil and the deep blue sea" and "between a rock and a hard place" express similar meanings.

Scylla and Charybdis (pronounced Skylla and Kharubdis) were mythical sea monsters in Greek mythology. They lived on opposite sides of the Strait of Messina between Sicily and Italy. Scylla was rationalized as a rock shoal (described as a six-headed sea monster) on the Italian side of the strait and Charybdis was a whirlpool off the coast of Sicily. They were regarded as maritime hazards located close enough to each other that they posed an inescapable threat to passing sailors; avoiding Charybdis meant passing too close to Scylla and vice versa.

What does it mean to “rest on our laurels”?

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and **rest on our laurels**. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. ~BB pg 85

To “rest on one's laurels” means to be satisfied with one's past accomplishments and not put forth any further efforts. In ancient Greece, the laurel was a plant that was sacred to the god Apollo. Laurel wreaths were awarded to the winning athletes in the Pythian games, held in honor of the god Apollo every four years at his sanctuary at Delphi.

TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

is printed on our A.A. birthday tokens.

This quote is a line from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

It is Polonius's last piece of advice to his son Laertes.

***This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.***

Definition: Be yourself; be true to yourself;
do not engage in self-deception.



The Spiritual Axiom

It is a **spiritual axiom** that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are in the wrong also.

~12&12 page 90

axiom: a self-evident truth that requires no proof; a universally accepted principle or rule.

ad infinitum

Here are some of the methods we have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, taking a trip, not taking a trip ... we could increase the list ad infinitum. ~BB pg 31

ad infinitum is a Latin phrase meaning "to infinity" or "forevermore"

The San Diego 90-Day Token

With a proliferation of tokens and medallions being distributed at A.A. meetings for varying lengths of sobriety, it is well to remember the origin of the very special San Diego 90-day token.

In 1946 a woman named Grace B. attained sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous in San Diego. Her non-alcoholic husband, Bill, was very involved in A.A., since at that time there was little distinction between alcoholic and non-alcoholic spouses when they were both committed to the program. Bill even went to the honor camps in the San Diego backcountry to carry the message of recovery to inmates there. Bill was a jeweler and an engraver, and to celebrate Grace's sobriety, in 1950 he created a token encrusted with jewels to honor her achievement. Others took note, and asked him to create tokens for them. He agreed, with the proviso that there would be no jewels attached. Thus, the token quickly represented the achievement of early sobriety. One side of the rectangular token says, "AA San Diego" and the other side reproduces the Serenity Prayer. A hole allows the token to be affixed to a key ring or chain. An early token is available for viewing at the San Diego A.A. Central Office.

These 90-day tokens are available for purchase at the Central Office in Vista. Historically, the A.A. groups have kept a supply on hand and given them to the sponsors to present to the newcomers upon attainment of 90 days of sobriety. The fact that the group - not the individual sponsor - bought the token is a powerful reminder of the importance of the A.A. group in sustaining sobriety.

Tens of thousands of shaky, grateful hands have accepted these tokens at the 90-day mark over the years. Our 90-day token, created in love in the early years of A.A. in San Diego County, continues to symbolize recovery for us all.

