



June 2020

# The Serenity Times

The monthly newsletter of the Darwin District



## Dr Silkworth

Bill W, one of the co-founders of AA, often gave credit to the many non-alcoholics who were instrumental in AA's formation and success, saying "AA has many founders."

Dr William Duncan Silkworth was the director of Charles B Towns Hospital in New York and specialised in the treatment of alcoholism. It was Dr Silkworth's theory, communicated to Bill W, that alcoholism was an illness beyond the alcoholic's mental control rather than a vice, habit or lack of character.

Dr Silkworth urged Bill W to emphasise the hopeless nature of alcoholism because he considered that only then would the alcoholic be willing to try a spiritual approach to solving his problem.

A man of great courage and principle, Dr Silkworth risked his reputation to champion AA's spiritual solution for alcoholism because he saw that it worked and because he knew of the desperate need for an effective solution. It is estimated that in his lifetime he treated over 40,000 alcoholics.

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## Sister Ignatia

Born Bridget Della Mary Gavin in County Mayo in Ireland in 1889, Sister Ignatia joined the Sisters of Charity of Saint Augustine in 1914 and was given the name Ignatia.

As a nun, Sister Ignatia served as a music teacher and later as a nurse. In 1928, Sister Ignatia was placed in charge of admissions at St Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. There, Sister Ignatia worked tirelessly to help alcoholics, including alongside Dr Bob S, one of the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. In those days, chronic alcoholics were routinely sent to mental asylums rather than hospitals and it was the policy of St Thomas Hospital to not treat alcoholics. Sister Ignatia, who was known as the alcoholic's 'Angel of Hope', admitted alcoholics furtively, under other diagnoses.

During her lifetime, Sister Ignatia was honoured for her work with alcoholics, including by President JF Kennedy, honours which she accepted not for herself but on behalf of her religious order and the nursing profession.

Sister Ignatia believed that love could surmount every obstacle and she was greatly loved in return. At her wake in 1966, the Sisters of Charity poured more than 6,000 cups of coffee.

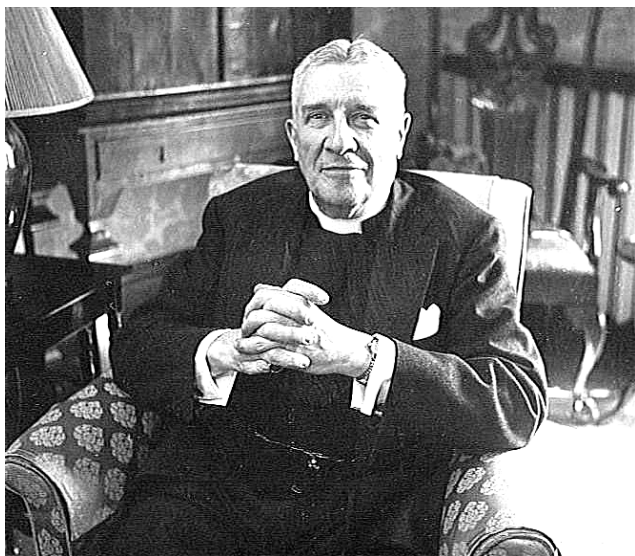
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## Dr Shoemaker

Born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1893, Samuel Moor Shoemaker was a priest of the Episcopal Church who was considered one of the best preachers of his day.

Dr Shoemaker was a member of the Oxford Group, where he met Bill W. It was the Oxford Group's spiritual program which led to Ebby T's sobriety and subsequent visit to Bill W in November 1934.

Bill W credited Dr Shoemaker as a key source of the ideas which underpin AA's 12-Step program of recovery: the alcoholic's need for self-examination, admission of character defects, restitution for harm done and working with others.

After Dr Shoemaker's death in 1963, Bill W wrote in *Grapevine*, "Dr Sam Shoemaker was one of AA's indispensables. Had it not been for his ministry to us in our early time, our Fellowship would not be in existence today."

Bill W said that it was Dr Silkworth who gave AA much needed knowledge of the nature of our illness, but that it was Dr Shoemaker who gave AA "the concrete knowledge of what we could do about it...the spiritual keys by which we were liberated."



## Fr Ed Dowling

Bill W met Father Ed Dowling, a Jesuit priest, in November 1940 when Father Ed arrived unannounced at Bill W and Lois's small flat on 24<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. Though Father Ed suffered terribly with arthritis, he walked the two flights rather than ask Bill W to meet him downstairs.

At the time, Bill W was very down because the newly published Big Book was not selling and AA was not flourishing as Bill W had hoped. Father Ed told Bill W that the force that was working through him was God and that events would unfold in God's perfect time. That night, for the first time in months, Bill W slept soundly. So began a 20-year friendship.

Over the years, Bill W often turned to Father Ed for spiritual advice and Father Ed would urge Bill W to make decisions based on poverty, humility and anonymity rather than on money, power and fame.

After Father Ed died in 1960, Bill W wrote in *Grapevine* that Father Ed was "an early and wonderful friend of AA, the greatest and most gentle soul to walk this planet."