

## **A 1943 A.A. Pamphlet**

by Gary N.

Thanks to a fellow AA History lover, Bob S. from Richmond, Indiana, Gwinnett has been able to obtain a 1943 A.A. Pamphlet which is representative of local A.A. literature of the times. The author of this pamphlet is said to be Larry J. Larry J. was a newspaperman from Cleveland, Ohio that had a spiritual awakening on a train as he traveled to Houston, Texas, as documented in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. Larry J. went on to author this pamphlet, and at least one previous pamphlet that included the six newspaper articles about A.A. that were written in the *Houston Press* no later than 1940. This 1943 pamphlet has ten parts:

### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

#### **Am I An Alcoholic?**

#### ***The Doctor's Nightmare***

#### ***The European Drinker***

#### ***Women Suffer Too***

#### ***Bill's Story***

#### **Medicine, Religion & Alcoholics Anonymous**

#### **The Twelve Steps**

#### **Our Friends Say**

#### **Book Review**

Highlights from these ten sections follow:

### **Alcoholics Anonymous, pages 1-2 (Introduction)**

"Alcoholics Anonymous has but one purpose: To help the sick alcoholic recover if he wishes . . . Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on any controversial subject, nor does it oppose anyone . . . Banded together in groups or sometimes working alone, we aim to help fellow drinkers recover their health . . . Rapidly growing, we number thousands of ex-drinkers who are now to be found in hundreds of American and Canadian communities . . . The only requirement for A.A. membership is an honest desire to stop drinking . . . We are glad to say that this book and the work for which it stands have been heartily endorsed by prominent physicians and clergymen both Catholic and Protestant."

The pamphlet is prior to the creation of the Traditions by a couple of years. The introduction above has some marked similarities and contrasts to the Traditions as they later evolved.

### **Am I An Alcoholic?, pages 3-4**

"Now suppose that you get drunk because you are hurt, angry, or worried. Or just because you are bored. . . . Has alcohol become a necessity? . . . Filled with the delusion that we could drink like our friends, we tried again and again to 'Take it or leave it' but could do neither. Always came the inevitable bender . . . Thousands of us have been delivered from this mysterious illness, long the despair of medicine and religion."

Isn't it refreshing to see that "being bored" is listed as a possible alcoholism reason to get drunk? (Isn't it so justified the next time you see a newcomer diddling with his cell phone during a meeting?)

### ***The Doctor's Nightmare, pages 5-8***

How interesting that this abbreviated story of "Dr. Bob" of Akron, Ohio appears in the pamphlet BEFORE *Bill's Story*! The story has been shortened by the elimination of many sentences, some entire paragraphs, and has been shrunk to four pages. A lot of Dr. Bob's adventures prior to his meeting Bill W. have been removed. Much of the essential closing to the original story remains, however it has been edited in certain places. The most glaring omission is that the last sentence of the original story has been removed: "Your Heavenly Father will never let you down!"

### ***The European Drinker, pages 9-12***

This is a First Edition Big Book story written by Joe Doppler of Cleveland, Ohio that remained until the Fourth Edition (along with the removal of the Home Brewmeister written by Clarence Snyder, the Fourth Edition eliminated the last stories written by Clevelanders in the Big Book). The story appears in a shortened form here, reduced from roughly 32 paragraphs in the original to around 20 in this booklet.

### ***Women Suffer Too, pages 12-16***

Marty Mann's story is a surprise entry here. The booklet was originally printed in 1940, reprinted in 1943, but Marty Mann's story was not included in the Big Book until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition in 1955. The story here is almost identical to the 1955 version, with the only differences (that I could find) being some paragraph separations and entire word capitalizations. Fascinating that her story would be included without any omissions, while no other story chosen for this pamphlet escaped being severely shortened.

### ***Bill's Story, pages 17-21***

Of great interest in this pamphlet is how Larry J. chose to abbreviate this 16 page story into just 5 pages. At first glance, one might think Larry J. entirely rewrote it. The first page of the pamphlet is the fourth paragraph of the original, thus the legendary beginning about "a Hampshire Grenadier" is bypassed. The fifth and sixth paragraphs of the original are shortened substantially, and the seventh eliminated altogether. Bill's golf paragraph is eliminated. Only the first three lines of page 5 (of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) are included (ending with 'necessity'). Only 4 sentences of page 6 remain. The narrative continues with the first paragraph of page 7 and continues until a large paragraph removed from page 8. The omissions go on and on. The only paragraph remaining from page 16 is the final one.

Would Bill W. have provided as much of a hatchet job to his story as Larry J. did? Would he ever have put Dr. Bob's story before his own? After all, he was the one that got sober first and chose to introduce the program of A.A. with his own story after *The Doctor's Opinion* in the original text. Might Larry J. have been remembering a Cleveland influence on him even before he stopped drinking, which led him to put Dr. Bob and Joe Doppler first?

### **Medicine, Religion, and Alcoholics Anonymous, pages 22-23**

The following comparison between medicine and religion (which in terms of the times can be equivalent to the spirituality of A.A.) was provided to a doctor in Australia by the A.A. Central Office in New York, and quoted in the pamphlet by the author.

#### **Medicine Says**

1. The alcoholic needs a personality change.
2. The patient out to be analyzed and should make a full and honest mental catharsis.
3. Serious "personality defects" must be cured through accurate self- knowledge and realistic readjustment to life.
4. The alcoholic neurotic retreats from life, is a picture of anxiety and abnormal self-concern, he withdraws from the "herd".
5. The alcoholic must find "a new Compelling interest in life", must "get back into the herd". Should find an interesting occupation, should join clubs, social activities, political parties or discover hobbies to take the place of alcohol.

#### **Religion Says**

1. The alcoholic needs a change of heart, a spiritual awakening.
2. The alcoholic should make examination of the "conscience" and a confession – or a moral inventory and a frank discussion.
3. Character defects (sins) can be eliminated by acquiring more honesty, humility, unselfishness tolerance, generosity, love etc.
4. The alcoholic basic trouble is self-centeredness. Filled with fear and self-seeking, he has forgotten the "Brotherhood of Man".
5. The alcoholic should learn the "exclusive power of a new affection, love of serving man, of serving God. He must "lose his life to find it", he should join the church, and there find self-forgetfulness in service. For "faith without works is dead".

The author later on summarizes:

"So, the main difference seems to add up to this: Medicine says, 'Know yourself, be strong and you will be able to face life'.

Religion says, "Know thyself, ask God for power and you become truly a free man'."

Without claiming any expertise on the validity of the above comparisons, and despite the fact that “Medicine Says” may in fact be an outside issue according to the Traditions of A.A., what would a comparable chart look like today that was written by the best advocates available for either column?

### **The Twelve Steps, pages 25-26**

Step 12 reads as “Having had a spiritual experience” rather than “awakening” just as the First Edition read at that time. The Twelve steps are listed followed by the full paragraph that immediately follows the steps as is on page 62 of the Big Book today. The section then concludes with: “The terms ‘spiritual experience’ and ‘spiritual awakening’ are used several times in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* which, upon careful reading, show that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.”

### **Our Friends Say, page 26-27**

Brief positive remarks are written here by the “eminent neurologist” Dr. Foster Kennedy, Dr. W.D. Silkworth, and Dr. John Stouffer, Chief Psychiatrist, Philadelphia General Hospital. Additional remarks are included from The Directors Bulletin, a Jesuit periodical published in St. Louis, Missouri, and from The Living Church (Episcopal).

Of particular interest is seeing the name of Dr. Silkworth. By this time, he had become comfortable associating his name with A.A. His name was not present in the first printing of the First Edition and probably wasn’t included until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Dr. Silkworth is said to have been reluctant to have his name shared when the Big Book was first published.

### **Book Review, page 28-29**

The very popular Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick provided a review of the Big Book by a Protestant clergyman in the summer of 1939, and it is reprinted here in its entirety.

For those in A.A. that emphasize that the program is spiritual and not religious, they may be initially disenchanted with the review as Dr. Fosdick wrote, “The core of their [A.A.’s] whole procedure is religious.” This sentence was written long before the controversy surrounded A.A. in the courts that, in part, cited the word “Creator” in the Big Book to rule that A.A. was to be treated as a religion. Later on, Dr. Fosdick does state “[Members of A.A.] are not partisans of any particular form of organized religion, although they strongly recommend that some religious fellowship be found by their participants.” That clarification may still not satisfy members of the fellowship sensitive to such matters regarding “God *as we understand Him.*” It is fair to say that the distinction between spirituality and religion becomes quite clear to the A.A. member that practices and understands the program.

### **Conclusion**

Bob S. of Richmond, Indiana is to be thanked for providing Gwinnett County with this wonderful period piece. It is a fascinating attempt to provide the message of recovery to a wider audience that could not afford, or were unwilling to spend, \$3.50 in the days when the Big Book was marketed to cost the equivalent of a college text book. The pamphlet also provides some hints that some Traditions were beginning to be formed even before they were called Traditions. Thus, we have one small additional reason to be grateful for the acquisition of one more piece of early A.A. history.

Pamphlet author Larry J. is credited in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* with sponsoring men that founded A.A in Austin, Texas and Tampa, Florida. He is also credited with carrying the message of recovery to a lady named Esther, “who presently moved to Dallas, where, with characteristic enthusiasm and energy, she founded A.A. in that town and became the dean of all the alky ladies in the astonishing state of Texas.”

But despite those historical credentials, Larry J. didn't stay sober. Before 1943 was over, Larry was drunk, and before 1944 was over, Larry J was dead.

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