

There's a Big Book original manuscript display at the Gwinnett Room, which was typed by Ruth Hock, Bill W.'s secretary at the time. The manuscript was provided to the publisher in a form that "had been revised and changed so much that it was almost unreadable," as read on page 205 of *Pass It On*. A few of the more significant revisions will be discussed here, along with a recommendation for Bill that he didn't take! News of a significant upcoming AA publishing event is included as well.

Bill Wilson was the author of the Big Book without question. However, there were so many hands involved in the creation of the book that Bill refers to himself in the 1954 talk "How The Big Book Was Put Together" not as the author but as the "referee." Ruth Hock stated that Bill Wilson would stand behind her as she typed some pages "50 times" as revision after revision was made. Bill is quoted that they "fought, bled and died" over some of the encounters they had over the manuscript.

Many people don't realize that there were specific contributors to the Big Book that were not members of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The book *Pass It On* documents these contributors on page 204:

Final editing of the book was done by Tom Uzzel, member of the faculty at New York University. Uzzel cut the book by at least a third (some say half—from 800 to 400 pages) and sharpened it in the process. . . . Dr. Howard, a psychiatrist in Montclair, New Jersey, made a vitally important contribution. He suggested that there were too many "you musts." Bill said the psychiatrists' idea was to remove all forms of coercion, to put our Fellowship on a "we ought" basis instead of a "you must basis."

Thank you, Dr. Howard for that recommendation! While Bill accepted this suggestion apparently graciously, he almost blew his top when Dr. Howard made known his additional opinion. Dr. Howard reputedly also said that Bill was making a big mistake: "This is the Oxford Group," Dr. Howard said. "You have to change the whole damn thing." There was too much God in it.

Bill rejected that advice, and many of us can be considered very thankful that Bill did!

Dr. Howard's name can be seen on pages 18 and 19 of the original manuscript where the third chapter "More About Alcoholism" begins. A sentence originally read: "It will be worth a bad case of jitters if you got thoroughly sold on the idea that you are a candidate for Alcoholics Anonymous." The sentence now reads on the top of page 32 of the Fourth Edition: "It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition."

The verb "sold" when it originally appeared was quite often removed, it seems. Selling and spirituality seemed to be considered mutually exclusive.

"To be doomed to a spiritual hell or to be 'saved' – not easy alternatives to face" at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of "We Agnostics" was changed. It became "To be doomed to a spiritual death or live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face."

Occasionally you'll hear at a meeting that not one word of the Big Book was changed from the day the original manuscript was changed into the First Edition in April of 1939. "Not one word has been changed of the first 164 pages" can be the assertion one hears. The assertion isn't true.

First of all, there are no Roman numerals in the First Edition, thus "The Doctor's Opinion" begins on page 1, and the words "trudge the road of happy destiny" that are in the conclusion of the basic program

is on page 179. Second, numerous small edits have taken place in the text such as changing "ex-alcoholic" to "ex-problem drinker" or "hundreds" to "thousands." The message of recovery has remained the same, but quite a few small revisions have been made in the text. The change to 1-164 took place when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition was printed in 1955.

Soon you will be able to purchase a Big Book in the form of a First Edition, First Printing as it looked in April of 1939. It will have the thick pages that gave it the name of a "Big Book!" In anticipation of AA's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday, a First Edition reprint will be available from Alcoholics Anonymous beginning in April of 2014. Each book sold separately will sell for \$12 plus \$10 shipping charges. Due to the quantity discounts being offered by AAWS, logic dictates that substantial savings will be to us if we purchase the books not from New York, but through our central offices.

The Atlanta Central Office intends to be purchasing these books in multiples of hundreds and providing a reduced price to final purchasers. How much each book will cost that is sold by the Atlanta Central Office has yet to be determined, but it seems clear that New York would rather have the central offices sell these books than handle each sale themselves.

These affordable books will soon be available that can give us the look and feel of the original First Edition. Now that over thirty million Big Books have been sold since 1939, owning a reproduction of the original can provide another way of appreciating just how valuable the message of recovery has been that has saved the lives of so many.