

## Silly, Fantastic or Perhaps Slightly Insane

by Gary N.

Five pamphlets are available from Akron AA ([akronaa.org](http://akronaa.org)) that were written by Evan W. at the request of Dr. Bob. The first of these pamphlets was written in 1941 and was titled "A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous." These words are on the cover: "This pamphlet was written and edited by members of Alcoholics Anonymous AA Group No. 1, popularly known as the King School Group. Akron Group No. 1 is the original chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous . . ."

To the newcomer, these AA pioneers wrote:

"Now you are in the hospital. Or perhaps you are learning to be in Alcoholics Anonymous the 'hard way' by trying to continue with your work while learning to become sober. You will have many callers. They will come singly or in pairs. They will arrive at all hours; from early morning far into the night. Some you will like, some you will resent; some will strike you as being silly, fantastic, or perhaps slightly insane; some will seem fanatics; some will doubtless tell you a story that will be 'right down your alley.' But remember this – never for a moment forget it: **EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM IS A FORMER DRUNK AND EVERY SINGLE ONE IS TRYING TO HELP YOU.**" [bolding in original]

More often than not people in the program of A.A. will read how the program isn't working today as it once did when the recovery rate supposedly was higher. One assertion will be that we're not stressing getting into the book enough. Others will insist that a particular format of meeting was used once upon a time, which better oriented the newcomer to the steps, and thereby assisted his recovery. Some might assert that newcomers are being encouraged today to try to recover without a Higher Power, which undermines their chances to stay sober.

Regardless of any of those assertions, where today does any hospital or treatment center follow the practices described in the Akron pamphlet above?

Where today does a coordinated team of program members, such as were organized and led by Dr. Bob and by some of his pigeons, call on patients in this way?

In today's litigation heavy society, it isn't hard to come up with numerous reasons why a treatment center wouldn't be keen on such practices. Soon after the patient, or any of his close acquaintances, learn that a patient is being approached by "silly, fantastic, or perhaps slightly insane" people that appear to be "fanatics," a lawsuit for big money seems inevitable, doesn't it?

Who would pay for such treatment? What insurance company would cover it?

Nevertheless, aren't there intriguing aspects to an approach where success in sobriety is paraded in front of the newcomer patient afflicted with alcoholism? What better way to treat many an alcoholic, suffering from the disease of denial, depression, and severe isolation, that he is worth saving and that very many people care? That if he gets out of that treatment center and stays sober, there are people all over the country just waiting to shake his hand and welcome him home?

Regardless, here is one more example that comparing A.A. today to A.A. of yesterday isn't as simple as it may sound sometimes. Times have changed. Our society has changed.

Yet one will hear how there were days in the past when A.A. was achieving a 75% success rate, and if we in A.A. start doing this or that, we can improve the newcomer's chance of getting and staying sober.

Let's read the real quote as written by Bill W. in the foreward to the second edition of the Big Book:

"Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way; 25% sobered up after some relapses . . ." [underline added not in original]

"And really tried." A powerful and obvious escape clause written by Bill W. But that escape clause seems oblivious or forgotten to many of the same people that assert that A.A. today is somehow broken.

The assertion can be made today, however, that for someone "who really tries," their chances to get and stay sober are as good as they ever have been. If so, then doesn't the question become how the newcomer can be convinced to really try?

Might we be missing a solution here? What would a sincere newcomer's impression be of A.A. if he did receive phone calls or visits from, say, twenty different people soon after he surrendered to the program? Where is this done today? Isn't it interesting that Dr. Bob set up a system where the people in the program took action first and called on the surrendered newcomer before he was able to take action for himself?

Maybe there's nothing wrong with A.A. that some actions by the people already sober can't correct by more often following the examples already set by Dr. Bob?

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