

So, You Want To Be a Sponsor?

by Gary N.

So, you say you want to be a sponsor?

The terms "Sponsorship" or "Sponsor", which aren't mentioned in the Big Book, are attributed to have been first used in Cleveland, Ohio during the fall of 1939, according to Clarence Snyder's legacy website www.cametobelieve.org and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*.

Articles written by Elrick B. Davis in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, at the direction of Clarence, had caused so much interest in AA around Cleveland, that the few sober people in Cleveland were "deluged" with requests from people claiming that they wanted to stop drinking. How could it be ensured that every needy drunk would be called upon? According to *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, "It was soon evident that a scheme of personal sponsorship would have to be devised . . ."

A list was created by Cleveland's newly formed AA Central Committee so that each home could be visited by a sober member of the program that could "sponsor" the potential newcomer into the program. AA meetings were not listed or publicized by the members back then. One had to be sponsored into the meetings. Hundreds of drunks were introduced to AA this way. The Cleveland pioneers had proved "the value of personal sponsorship . . ."

In many cases hospitalization was recommended to the newcomer. It was the responsibility of the sponsor, according to the central committee, to arrange for the hospital to be paid for accepting the new patient. If you had to arrange for your new sponsee's hospital bills, would you say you still wanted to be a sponsor?

However, soon the only requirement for AA membership became a desire to stop drinking. All sorts of activities and themes were visualized back then that didn't stand the test of time. As one learns more and more about AA history, a very clear theme emerges: a Higher Power is at work in AA, which has formed a program beyond the vision of mere human power.