

Don't Coerce Him Into A Hospital

by Gary N.

Five pamphlets are available from Akron AA (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 . . ."

On sponsorship, these AA pioneers wrote:

"If you don't know how he is going to pay his hospital bill, don't put him in the hospital unless you are willing to assume financial responsibility. It is definitely your job to see that he has visitors . . ."

"DON'T COERCE HIM [your sponsee which Akronites called a baby and here is called a patient] INTO A HOSPITAL. DON'T GET HIM DRUNK AND THEN THROW HIM IN WHILE HE IS UNCONSCIOUS. CHANCES ARE THAT WHEN HE SOBERS UP HE WON'T LAST." (All caps in the original).

"An hour on the telephone will produce callers. Don't depend on chance. Stray visitors will drop in [to the hospital], but twenty or thirty phone calls will clinch matters and remove uncertainty. It is your responsibility to conjure up callers."

"When your patient is out of the hospital your work has not ended. It is now your duty not only to him but to yourself to see that he starts out on the right foot. See to it that he gets to his first meeting and accompany him on his first hospital call. Telephone him when you know other patients. REMEMBER, YOU DEPEND ON THE NEW COMER'S SOBRIETY TO KEEP YOU SOBER AS MUCH AS HE DEPENDS ON YOU! Never lose touch with your responsibility. Drop into his home or his office occasionally. Telephone him. Talk to him at meetings. Encourage him to look you up. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY NEVER ENDS."

These few paragraphs written back in 1941 in Akron illustrate that a newcomer was expected to be hospitalized, by his sponsor, before he ever attended an AA meeting. How different! The newcomer was to experience an orientation to the spiritual nature of recovery from experienced AA's, one or two at a time, as soon as he was considered suitably conscious. Today the introduction of the spiritual nature of recovery may not be introduced to the newcomer until after he's released from the treatment center. He may be attending his first AA meeting without any orientation to AA whatsoever, and therefore, be naturally cautious about the nature of the AA meeting.

The role of the sponsor is described above as having characteristics of a job and work. Spending time arranging up to thirty phone calls for a newly sober "baby" does sound like work, doesn't it? Do you know anybody that does this?

Treatment centers may provide group exposure with other patients. Some allow AA meetings on their property and allow patients to attend. Today a newly sober individual may not encounter an experienced AA one-on-one until after he attends his first AA meeting. How many meetings might the newcomer attend before he even gets a sponsor? Who knows? Some never do, though they may claim to have a sponsor when asked. They just don't call him.

Times have changed, haven't they? Occasionally one will encounter an "expert" that suggests that AA is somehow broken, and that the membership today doesn't "do it right." However, the more AA today is compared to the AA of the past, isn't it clear that the world that surrounds AA has changed so much, too? We can't go back to the past, like it or not, as sure as a sponsor today isn't going to pay for his next "baby's" hospital bills. After all, getting back to basics, my sponsor reminds me that if I haven't had a drink today, I'm a winner. There's a couple of a million folks today around that are winners, too!