

WESTBORO BIG BOOK STUDY GROUP

All Saints Anglican Church

Saturday Morning 9:00 a.m.

347 Richmond Road (near Churchill)

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The History Behind the Big Book - Forward to the Second Edition

(Tape 1 - 00:28:19.0)

Big Book, p. xvi, line 8 “This work at Akron continued through the summer of 1935. There were many failures, but there was an occasional heartening success.”

J & C You know we always give credit to Bill and Bob and the first one hundred, which rightly we should. But if we were to go back and think about that summer of 1935 these guys really, they didn't have much idea about what they were doing. They had found a few simple things that had worked for them. And they would try this on many, many different people that summer. And if it worked then they would keep it and if something didn't work they might discard that, learning as they went through that summer working with people. I know one of Dr. Bob's favorite things was to fill them up with sauerkraut juice mixed with honey. He knew that there was vitamins in that sauerkraut juice that would help the body, and of course the honey was a form of energy. And they tried that amongst many a different things. And every once in a while, one of these guys would fall over dead. I can almost see Bill turn to Bob and say, oh shit, let's don't do that again. I think maybe we ought to give credit to those they failed with that summer too. They probably learned more from their failures than they did from their successes.

Big Book p. xvii, line 11 “When the broker returned to New York in the fall of 1935, the first A.A. group had actually been formed, though no one realized it at the time.”

J & C You know this little group of alcoholics that was going to the Oxford Group; you know they were having troubles with the Oxford Group because the Oxford Groups had four absolutes. And the drunks were having trouble being absolutely anything, as we well know, they couldn't practice that, and it seemed like that these drunks liked to stand off in the corner someplace and drink coffee and smoke cigarettes and tell stories, not necessarily mix in with the other Oxford Group meeting members, so they began to call them the Drunk Squad of the Oxford Group. And that's what they liked, to separate themselves from the normal Oxford Group members.

Big Book p. xvii, par 3 “A second small group had promptly taken shape at New York.”

J & C When Bill went back to New York City, he began to apply there what he had learned in Akron. Instead of talking about spirituality, he talked to the new people there about the **exact** nature of the illness and sure enough he got their attention. Some of them began to respond and a second little group started in New York City. And besides there were scattered alcoholics who had picked up the basic ideas in Akron or New York and were trying to form A.A. groups in other cities.

Big Book p. xvii, line 19 “By late 1937, the number of members having substantial sobriety time behind them was sufficient to convince the membership that a new light had entered the dark world of the Alcoholic.”

J & C In the summer of 1937 Bill was back in Akron, again on a business venture, and he decided to go by and see Dr. Bob and see how things were going in Akron. And they sat down in Dr. Bob's kitchen and they counted the number of people they knew that were staying sober, based on these three little pieces of information, and they found approximately 40 people sober.

And I think it's the first time that they really began to realize; maybe we really have found the answer to this thing called alcoholism. If we've found the answer then we need to get it to as many alcoholics as we possibly can. So the question immediately becomes well what's the best way to do that and maybe this is the beginning of the group conscious, cause Bill and Bob decided they didn't want to make that decision themselves, it was too important. And they called a meeting of the Oxford Group there in Akron and at that meeting that night there was eighteen people there, some alcoholic, some non-alcoholic, and the topic of conversation was, how can we best carry this message of recovery to the greatest number of people. Now they decided that night to do three things.

- (1) In those days you could hardly get an alcoholic in a hospital for detoxification. Any doctor that put one in there had to lie about their condition. Alcoholism wasn't very popular in the 1930's, that's for sure. So they decided, now remember this is in the midst of the depression now in 1932, nobody has a dime hardly at all, and they decided what they needed to do was to build a chain of hospitals stretching all the way across the United States where any alcoholic that needed it would be able to have detoxification. I would assume Dr. Bob was going to be the head doctor.

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- (2) They also felt that this little message of recovery they had was so vital that not everybody could be entrusted with carrying it correctly. So they decided they needed to hire a group of individuals, train them and you know let them spread out across the United States more or less as missionaries to carry this message of recovery. I would assume Bill Wilson was going to be the head missionary too.
- (3) And then they said you know the Oxford Groups have written a lot of books, spiritual in nature and they've been very popular. Back in the 1930's people read a lot of books, this was in the days before television. They're really a time before television, believe me there was. And they felt that if they could come up with a book on alcoholism, what it is, and the solution to it and a way to bring that about. The first comprehensive book on alcoholism the world had ever seen, that then surely this book would become one of the world's greatest best sellers, and they can take the profits from the book and build the hospitals and train the missionaries.

That was one reason behind the book. But I think

the main reason behind the book was that they had already noticed
carrying this message one on one, one person to another
that it already had begun to be changed.

And you know how people are, when we hear something good well we like to repeat it. But we'll usually add just a little bit to it, and then the next one will add a little more, and a little more, and a little more, and after a little while it doesn't resemble the first thing. And they said

what we really need to do is take these three pieces of information about
the problem, the solution and a program of action
put it down in a written form where it would no longer be changed, no longer be garbled,
and any alcoholic anywhere in the world in the future would have this same information,
it would be pure.

And they made the decision that night to write the Big Book, "Alcoholics Anonymous". Now thank God only one of the three things they decided that night came true. They never did get to build the hospitals because the book didn't make very much money in the beginning. They didn't get to hire and train the missionaries. But they did get to write the book. (p. xvii, line 25)

Big Book p. xvii, line 19 "This determination bore fruit in the spring of 1939 by the publication of this volume. The membership had then reached about 100 men and women."

J & C And after they wrote the book they sat down one night at a meeting and they were trying to determine what they were going to call the book. They needed a title for the book so someone said, well let's call it "The Way Out", that sounds like a pretty good name for a book. They did some research on that some later and they found out there were some 10 or 12 other books called

"The Way Out", so they discarded that. Somebody else suggested, well let's call it, "Comes the Dawn", now that sounds like a pretty good title for a book, and they discussed that a while and kicked that around and decided not to do that. Somebody said, let's call it "A Hundred Men", now that really sounds like a good name for a book. Well then a woman joined the group and they couldn't call it "A Hundred Men and A Women", so they discarded that idea. Bill suggested, hey let's call it "The Bill W. Movement", they discussed that about 5 minutes and kicked that out. And then one evening someone suggested, that we're alcoholics and we want to remain anonymous, how about "Anonymous Alcoholics", or "Alcoholics Anonymous", that caught on. And that's what they called the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous". And the first "Alcoholics Anonymous" that the world had ever seen was a book called "Alcoholics Anonymous". It says here,

*Big Book p. xvii, line 27 "The fledgling society (this drunk squad of the Oxford Group),
"... which had been nameless now began to be called Alcoholics Anonymous, from the title of its own book.."*

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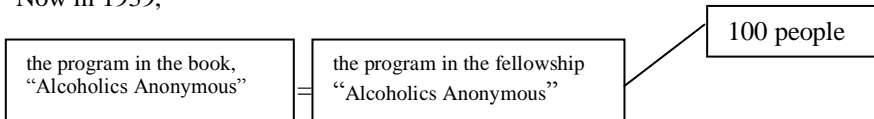
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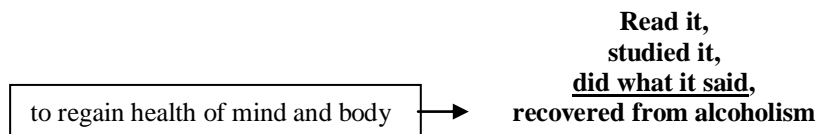
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J & C So we have two Alcoholics Anonymous don't we. We have a book entitled, "Alcoholics Anonymous", and then we have a fellowship entitled "Alcoholics Anonymous". Two A.A.'s and we still have that today. And I think this is very important for us to think about. This group of people who had been nameless, they had been known as the Drunk Squad of the Oxford Groups, wrote a book and in that book they put their program of recovery and they called the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous". And after the book was published they then decided to call themselves "Alcoholics Anonymous".

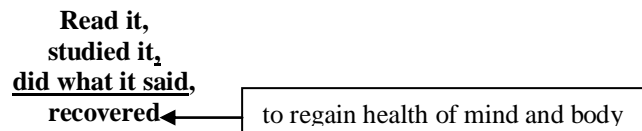
Now in 1939,



were exactly the same. The book then began to go out across the United States and the first person out here in California got a copy of this book.



started a group called "Alcoholics Anonymous". The first person in Arkansas got a copy of this book.



started a group called "Alcoholics Anonymous". Now the growth of the fellowship began to come from the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Now as the fellowship began to grow and get bigger and bigger and bigger, they began to notice something that the first 100 didn't have. They began to notice the great power of a fellowship of people who had escaped from a common problem. Now the first one hundred didn't have that; they only had one hundred people period.

(Tape 1 - 00:38:57.8)

11 minutes