

This is how it appeared in the 1968 Grapevine. See if you can find the mistake.
Take it easy & God bless!

Just Love,
Barefoot Bill

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Big Book Stories - Updated (4 of 5)

This is the fourth article in the Grapevine's series by authors of the personal histories in the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. The Big Book was published in 1935; the revised, enlarged version came out in 1955. Now, the author of "Rum, Radio and Rebellion," page 317 in the revised (second) edition, stresses themes that seem of the greatest importance to him now - responsibility and gratitude to AA: "It distresses me particularly when I see older members gradually drop out of the picture."

No Graduation from AA!

This question has been asked of me on more than one occasion: "If you had it to do over again, would you change your story in the Big Book?" My story (titled "Rum, Radio and Rebellion") was written after nine years of sobriety in AA. Today, after twenty-one years of this new way of life, I will let the story stand, however much I would like to add to it. I have been very fortunate in having the opportunity to speak at AA conferences, banquets, and state conventions. (Join AA and see the world!) And here I want to give just a short qualification and spend more time on what Alcoholics Anonymous means to me. Nine years of AA certainly did not qualify me on two subjects I now like to stress (not that I am fully qualified on these now, or ever will be): the spiritual part of our program and the responsibility to our group and to AA as a whole.

My opinions on these subjects are not mine alone, but are what I have gathered from many who have been in the program for a long time and are still working it successfully one day at a time.

I came into AA in 1945. I believed in God, but that was about the limit of my spiritual qualifications. Actually, I was in the program about three years before I found comfort and deep satisfaction in prayer. Insight gradually came to me through the voices of older members. I became convinced through meditation and prayers (Step Eleven) that I had neglected one of the most important facets of our program.

When we moved into a new home and district several years ago in Pittsburgh, various ministers called inviting us to attend their churches. It became a little embarrassing to my wife at times when the minister was groping around to find out just what our religion was. One young minister came quickly to the point by asking, "Mrs. W----, just what is your husband's religion?"

Without hesitancy, she said, "Alcoholics Anonymous."

His reply was "I don't know of a better one!"

Of course AA is not a religion, but it is most definitely a spiritual program. In my years in this Fellowship, I have yet to see a happy member who does not seek and take advantage of the spiritual benefits to their fullest extent.

Our responsibility to our group, to AA as a whole, and especially to General Service is a subject dwelt upon far too lightly by many of our members. It distresses me particularly when I see older members gradually drop out of the picture. Not only do we need their good experience, but they should be grateful enough to carry on the message as their responsibility to the future of Alcoholics Anonymous and, in many instances, to their very own sobriety.

I'll never forget one individual who approached me several years ago. He opened conversation by stating that I probably did not remember him, but six years ago I had brought him to his first AA meeting.

He went on to say that it did not "take" until three years later, when he found himself on skid row and remembered me and the meeting I took him to. He then sought AA again. He had been sober three years and had driven over 200 miles to thank me for showing him the way.

That night I gratefully thanked God for my sobriety and my active association with AA. You and I will never know when some future member will walk through the door of your meeting or mine, bankrupt in every department, but seeking us out for help because we planted the seed months and even years ago. At times like this, I am so grateful that I was at my meeting to extend a welcoming hand.

It could be most distressing to that prospective member if he asked for you and was told, "He never made the grade. As far as we know, he is still drinking." Such an answer would be more than disconcerting to the down-and-outer. It could mean that his life was left hanging in the balance.

I hate to meet members who consider that they have graduated from AA. They are missing so much! I know now that sobriety is not a destination, but an endless journey. I hastily add: a very beautiful journey.

P.W., Cleveland, Tenn.