

Why Study A. A. History?

Why study, or for that matter, even discuss the history of Alcoholics Anonymous? What difference would it make? How could it affect how we live and work our own individual recovery? Who cares? The history of AA can be both educational and fascinating and help in making the recovery process a fruitful one. In a quote attributed to Carl Sandburg, he summed it up when he wrote; "Whenever a civilization or society declines (or perishes) there is always one condition present - they forgot where they came from." This quote, often used by Frank M., Archivist for AA General Services gives a warning to present and future generations of AA members to "Keep It Green." The Washingtonians, The Oxford Group and others forgot where they came from. They watered-down and made changes to their respective movements which eventually led to their demise.

AA members could take notice and begin to learn their roots. The history of AA can be both educational and fascinating and help in making the recovery process a fruitful one. Bill W. stated in 1940 that of those entering AA, 50 percent never drank again. 25 percent remained sober throughout their lives after experiencing some early difficulties and the remaining

25 percent could not be accounted for. Bill stated that 75 percent of AA members back then got well -- they recovered. Group records indicate that in Cleveland, Ohio there was a 93 percent success rate for recovery in the early 1940's. Could these astounding figures be attributed to the fact that only low-bottom alcoholics came into AA? Could they be attributed to the lack of multiple addictions? We think not. Early records indicate that though a great number of early members were considered as low-bottom, there were many who entered AA before losing everything. Both Dr. Bob and Bill had difficulties with drugs other than alcohol.

Bill struggled with these problems until his death in 1971. Why did they stay sober? The original members of AA, between 1935 and 1939 went to only one meeting per week, and that meeting wasn't an AA meeting - they were Oxford Group meetings. They got well and they recovered. Why? There was no 90-in-90 back then. It is not even mentioned in the first 164 pages of the Big Book. There were no conventions, retreats or treatment centers, as we know them today. There weren't even the 12 Steps until 1938. Why did they stay sober, on a continuous basis until their deaths? The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous and the way of life described within its pages is probably the most sane way of living possible. It promises a changed life, removal of obsession, removal of fear and being "rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we have not even dreamed." Were these people who wrote the book

long-term members of AA? Did they have decades of recovery behind them, which gave them the wisdom to write such a "prescription for a miracle?" What they did have was a program of recovery and determination to do whatever it took to stop drinking forever. The longest term of sobriety for those who wrote this book was just over four years.

The average was about eighteen months. All were relative newcomers, those who wrote and described what this writer and many others describe as the greatest spiritual movement of the 20th Century. They didn't have the benefit of daily meetings, many didn't have telephones and there were no 28-day treatment centers. What they did have was a program of recovery and determination to do whatever it took to stop drinking forever. The study of the history of AA will show you what it was that worked so many wonders, which resulted in so many miracles. Learning about where AA came from and what they did will give you an idea of what they had. Remember, "If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths to get it..." Strengthening the fellowship

It is this writer's hope and prayer that a continuing dialogue and forum be made available to study the history of AA.

Hopefully, this continuing open discussion will not only serve to strengthen your personal recovery but also begin the serve to strengthen AA as a whole. Revolving Door Recovery will eventually lead AA

towards the fate of the Washingtonians and the Oxford Group. For the sake of the future generations of alcoholics, I pray that AA remain strong.