28 Reading the AA Message

Human beings, we are told, learn many things best by seeing and touching as well as hearing them; and reading about them reinforces the strength of such learning even further.

There are many good publications on alcoholism, and some not so good. Many of us have also profited by reading in other fields. But AA. neither endorses nor opposes anybody else's publications. We simply offer our own.

Even drinkers who have never before been much for reading spend hours poring over AA material. It is undoubtedly the best way to grasp a broad, firsthand consensus of all AA wisdom, instead of just the hearsay of one time and place.

There are seven AA books and three booklets in a format similar to this one.

"Alcoholics Anonymous"

This is the basic textbook of AA experience. AA as we know it is the outgrowth of this book, which was originally prepared by a hundred or so alcoholics who had learned to stay sober by helping each other. After a few years of sobriety, they recorded what they had done and gave the account this title. Our Fellowship then began to be called by the name "Alcoholics Anonymous."

In this volume, the original AA experience is spelled out by those who did it first, then wrote about it. It is the primary source book of all basic AA. thought for all of us—whether we read and reread it often or seldom. Most members get a copy as soon after coming to AA as they can, so they may take the fundamental AA. ideas directly from the source, not hear of them second- or third-hand.

Members often refer to "Alcoholics Anonymous" as the "Big Book," but not to compare it with any sacred text. Its first printing (in 1939) was on very thick paper, so it came out surprisingly fat and was laughingly dubbed the Big Book.

The first 11, basic chapters were written by Bill W., co-founder of AA It also contains many AA members' own stories, as written by themselves, and several appendixes of additional matter.Simply reading the book was enough to sober up

some people in AA's early days, when there were only a few AA groups in the world. It still works that way for some problem drinkers in isolated parts of the world, or for those who live on seagoing vessels.

Regular readers of the book say that repeated readings reveal many deeper meanings that cannot be grasped at the first hurried glance.

"Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions"

AA fundamentals are discussed at even greater depth in this book, also written by Bill W. (It is sometimes nicknamed "The Twelve and Twelve.") Members who want to study the AA program of recovery seriously use it as a text in conjunction with the Big Book.

Written 13 years after "Alcoholics Anonymous," this smaller volume explains principles of AA behavior, both individual and group. The Twelve Steps, guides to individual growth, had been discussed more briefly in the Big Book; the group principles—the Twelve Traditions—became crystallized through trial and error, after the first book was published. They characterize the movement and make it unique—quite unlike other societies.

"Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age"

This brief history tells how the Fellowship started, and how it grew for its first 20 years. It recounts the tale of how a small group of courageous, once-hopeless former drunkards—with all the odds against them—finally became securely established as a worldwide movement of acknowledged effectiveness.

"As Bill Sees It"

A reader of Bill W.'s pithiest paragraphs, from his voluminous personal correspondence as well as other writings. A subject index covers topics of interest to any problem drinker.

"Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers"

The life story of AA's co-founder is interwoven with recollections of early AA in

The life story of AA's co-founder is interwoven with recollections of early AA in the Midwest, mostly in pioneer members' own words.

"Pass It On"

This biography of AA's co-founder is subtitled "The Story of Bill Wilson and How the AA Message Reached The World." It also traces the development of the Fellowship; 39 photographs from AA's history.

"Came to Believe"

Subtitled "The Spiritual Adventure of AA as Experienced by Individual Members," this is a collection of 75 members' versions of "a Power greater than ourselves." They range from orthodox religious interpretations through humanistic and agnostic views.

"Daily Reflections"

Subtitled "A Book of Reflections by AA Members for AA Members". AA's reflect on favorite quotations from AA literature. A reading for each day of the year.

"AA. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate"

A collection of 32 stories, previously printed in the AA Grapevine, sharing the experience of men and women who found AA while in prison.

Pamphlets

Many leaflets on various aspects of AA, some of them addressed to special-interest groups, are also published by AA World Services, Inc. They have all been carefully prepared under close supervision by AA representatives from all over the U.S. and Canada, so that they represent the broadest possible consensus of AA thinking. It is impossible to understand all the workings of AA unless one is well acquainted with all these publications (complete listing on page 90). In addition, the AA General Service Office produces a bimonthly newsletter, Box 4-5-9, and several other periodical bulletins, as well as a report on the annual General Service Conference of AA.

Many A.A. members start and end each day with a quiet moment in which they read a passage of some AA literature. Poring over AA books and pamphlets represents "a meeting in print" for many members, and the range of AA information and inspiration summed up in them cannot be found anywhere else. Any AA reading starts a trail of AA thinking which leads away from a drink, so many AA's always carry with them some piece of AA literature—not just because reading it can help ward off the kind of thinking that leads to drinking, but also because it can afford refreshment and entertainment for the mind at odd moments. AA literature not available at an AA meeting can be ordered directly by writing to: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

The AA. Grapevine

Every month, a fresh collection of AA thought and humor appears in this magazine. Almost all its articles, graphics, and cartoons are by A.A. members. The writers are not paid, and many illustrations also are contributed free.

It contains thought pieces, illustrated stories, news about AA, letters from AA members around the globe, and inspirational articles (no poems).

Individual subscriptions may be ordered directly by writing to: Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Copies of the current issue are usually available at meetings of AA groups.