

March 1972

# The Big Book Tells It Like It Is

*If you really don't know how we recover,  
you can look it up*

IN THE JANUARY 1970 Grapevine, D. P. of Ogden, Utah, posed the question of how members handled meetings *before* the Big Book. Co-founder Bill W. wrote much on that subject, especially in *AA Comes of Age*. However, D. P.'s question brought another question to my mind: How do we handle meetings *after* the Big Book? Drunkalogs still seem to be the main topic at many meetings. Speakers often start out, "The Big Book says I should tell you what I used to be like, what happened, and what I'm trying to be like now." Then follows forty-five to fifty minutes of a drunkalog, usually ended by a few minutes of "Now I'm in AA, and everything is wonderful. I don't know how it works, but it works."

This is nonsensical. The fifth chapter of the Big Book tells "How It Works." Even the original foreword says, "To show other alcohol-

ics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book." Chapter 5 also says: "Our stories disclose in a general way [not in a detailed, blow-by-blow description] what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now." The stories in the Big Book helped me identify with the early members and assured me that they knew exactly how I felt. So it was (and is) up to me to do the things they suggested to start (and continue) my own recovery. Please do not misunderstand; I don't always *do* these things, just because I know them. I know a lot about how good golf should be played, too; but I'm still a hacker, because I don't practice enough. However, my life doesn't depend upon playing golf properly.

As I study the B. B., I see that the right place for my drunkalog is explained in Chapter 7, "Working With Others." There is where we at-



tempt to establish communications — "the language of the heart" — with a sick alcoholic. There is where our drinking experience can be shared, one drunk talking to another.

I believe that, if we've been around long enough for a reasonable base of physical sobriety and a measure of spiritual growth, our talks at meetings can disclose what we used to be like in our early months or years of AA, what happened to awaken us to the spiritual power of the program, and how we have applied the program to specific problems in our recent life. I've learned more than I need to know about getting drunk, hiding bottles, and all the sordid details a drunk experiences. I need to learn more and more about how the recovery program is applied *now* to today's continuing problems of living.

Meetings are important to continued progress. I had a few months

as a Loner on Eniwetok, many years ago. My Big Book and letters from those beautiful gals at GSO and the Grapevine made it easier for me to stay with the program, but the sharing at meetings was sorely missed.

I often wonder about the seemingly large number of speakers who brag that they have never read the Big Book. Just how much of the program can they possibly talk about? At our meetings, we usually hear a reading of the Preamble, the Twelve Steps (from Chapter 5), the Twelve Traditions, and often a couple of pages from Chapter 3. Yet if that's *all* we hear, how can we possibly *know* the program? It seems to me that a reading of excerpts from the Big Book and the short form of the Twelve Traditions will no more provide recovery than reading a cookbook will prevent starvation. Action must follow, or nothing will materialize from either one.

The expression "Tell it like it is" may have become trite, but unless we in AA really tell it like it *is* in the AA program, instead of just talking about the lousy drunks we used to be, we may send some newcomers away before they really have a chance to find out what the program has to offer.

How responsible are we?

C.D., *El Monte, Calif.*