

July 1995

No substitute

From Oshkosh, Wisc.:

It has become apparent to me as time passes that the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is being replaced by handy little pamphlets and 8 1/2" x 11" sheets of paper laminated in plastic.

When I arrived at the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in September of 1969, the Big Book was introduced to me as the textbook of recovery. The Big Book was displayed, read from, referred to and given to the newcomer to keep and to use.

I have attended many meetings of late where there are no Big Books displayed, read from or even used as reference.

At first I went along with the group and read the first part of chapter five and the Twelve Traditions from those pages in laminated plastic. But as I really began to listen to the chairperson

announce the reading I put myself in the position of the newcomer and realized that under those circumstances I would have no idea where those words came from and if the Big Book was mentioned in passing I would have no idea what book they were talking about. It would also be impossible for me to know what else was contained in the book, why it was written, who it was written for, or it's value to my life and my sobriety. That was indeed a frightening observation.

When I hear people chant at the end of a meeting, "It works if you work it," I wonder if they know what "it" is?

I again carry my Big Book to meetings, read from it and refer to it as I did in the beginning. The program of recovery and the design

for living is clearly and simply defined in the Big Book. An old-timer once told me that "opinions are like noses, everybody has one; but the answers you need are in the Big Book and you can't argue with that!" Thank God I listened to those wise words and when I repeat the phrase, "It works if you work it," I know what "it" means.

Carole T.