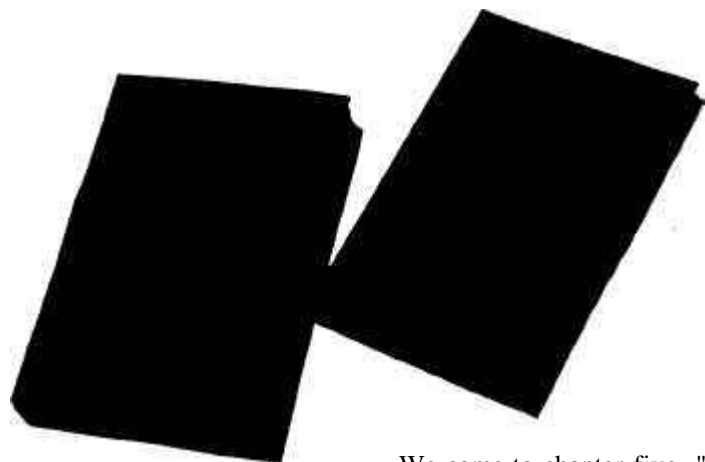


January 1984



Only Suggestions?

IN THESE times of seeking the "easier, softer way," we hear quite often, "Oh, I don't have to take the Steps — they're just suggested."

Yes, just suggested for those who "want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it." They are "suggested as a program of recovery," and the ingredients of that program are the Steps. No Steps — no program.

In the very beginning of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, we are told, "To show other alcoholics *precisely how we have recovered* is the main purpose of this book." So we proceed toward sobriety and into the very meat of the instructions on how to obtain and maintain a sober way of life.

We come to chapter five, "How It Works." From the title, I would gather that someone is trying to tell us something, yet we often hear it said, "I don't know how it works." I suggest that these people read chapter five, study chapter five, and follow the instructions given in chapter five. It starts with "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path," and continues to give complete instructions for alcoholics on how to "completely give themselves to this simple program." Later, the book says, "...**then** you are ready to take certain Steps." We are asked to be "fearless and thorough" and told that "half measures availed us nothing.... Here are the Steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery." As one of our friends says, "And if you want to get sober, you better took them."

I have tried to determine why so many people delay and procrastinate over taking the Steps. I think it comes down to ego — the fear of someone's

seeing us as we really are. Another thing that causes fear is the huge overall size of the job when we look at the Steps in their entirety, instead of one Step at a time. If we stare at our entire past all at once — or try to — it is a fearful sight. But again, "one day at a time" calms it down.

It has been said that the hardest part of taking a written inventory is finding a notebook and a pencil. We never get through if we don't start. We start with Step One — where else? — and proceed into sobriety one Step at a time. "If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half-way through."

The mental worth of sincerely

taking the Steps cannot be overestimated, and the good feelings that we get with completing our first trip through the Steps cannot be bought; I never found them in a bottle. The results are well worth all the effort, fear, shame, procrastination, doubt, soul-searching, ego deflation, and prayers that we put into our being reborn into a new life.

Our mentors, with their God-given wisdom, tell us, "If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain Steps." When all else fails, follow directions.

Simple, isn't it?

K.W., Sierra Vista, Ariz.