

August 1976

Third Edition of Big Book Is Now in Print

The third edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* providentially came off the press just as the last printing of the second edition had been exhausted. The new Big Book had been years in preparation, going through the same careful process that keeps all AA literature as close as possible to an expression of the Fellowship's group conscience.

That phrase "new Big Book" may sound startling. We have all heard AA talks that recall a newcomer's alcoholic arrogance with the words "At first, I wanted to rewrite the Big Book." Upon opening a copy of the third edition, the wary reader will be relieved to find that the Big Book has *not* been rewritten. The basic text (pp. 1-164) is unaltered; so is the section of personal stories headed "Pioneers of A.A." In the sections headed "They Stopped in Time" and "They Lost Nearly All," 17 stories have been retained from the second edition, and 13 new stories have been added, to reflect present-day membership more accurately.

In 1939, when the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was first published, it gave its name to a hitherto "nameless bunch of alcoholics," then numbering only about 100. More than 300,000 copies of that edition were eventually printed, playing a powerful role in AA's growth to a membership of about 130,000 by 1955, when the second edition was produced. Successive printings brought the combined distribution of these two editions to a total of 1,450,000 by the spring of this year, when the third appeared. Its cover is a lighter shade of blue; the title is printed in a more modern type face that emphasizes the initials "AA"—meaningless before 1939, but now meaning life itself to over 1,000,000 alcoholics.