



# UNITY

A

life-saving

commodity

THE more AA birthdays I celebrate the greater becomes my sense of wonder and gratitude for the insight that enabled our founders and their collaborators to write the Big Book. I am just as profoundly impressed by the language of the Traditions and the Legacies. The writings of Bill W. and the late Dr. Bob provide further proof for me, if any were needed, that they and the movement they began were not the product of chance, but were rather inspired and guided by a Higher Power.

This same guidance has, I believe, enabled our trusted servants and the General Service Conferences through the years to avoid the pitfalls that have claimed so many other movements with similar motivation and objectives.

In our Traditions we have the blueprint for the survival of AA;

in the other Legacies we have hope for all the suffering alcoholics in the world, Bill W. describes them as "25,000,000 men and women in the world who are still engulfed in alcoholism."

In our three-sided insignia with the words Recovery, Unity and Service, we have another example of inspiration in the choice of words.

Take Unity, for example. It is *not* parochial, provincial, insular, nationalistic, isolationist, or exclusive. Unity is *not* just a word to apply to our own little groups, as members of our own little movement, great though it is. Unity must relate us to all alcoholics everywhere. What does Bill W. say? "And of that 25,000,000, we have fished one out of every 100. We

need better communication. Millions more would come in if only we knew how to cooperate with other agencies. Let us therefore perfect our communications."

Unity is again a theme in Bill's series of articles entitled, "Let's be Friendly with Our Friends." "We must remember," he writes, "that a great many of these condemned (the 25,000,000) are perhaps not amenable (or responsive) to Alcoholics Anonymous. Therefore I think we ought to cast aside our early fears, however justified they were at the time, and try to increase our friendly cooperation with whomever is trying to tackle this field. A lot of people are trying in different ways to make a dent in this huge problem. . . . I think we can go a little overboard on the

friendly side, because these people are in touch with drunks who may approach them, but won't approach us."

The old saying, "*Only* an alcoholic can help an alcoholic," is utterly false and can, I believe, even have tragic consequences if held to. When I first came to AA I was made aware very soon of conflicting views. Some said, "Don't go near the——Clinic (an official program). They will fill you up with a lot of psychological claptrap and they don't know what they are talking about. Not one of their counselors is an alcoholic."

One man told me earnestly, "If you haven't been chased up a tree by a bear, you can't possibly know what it feels like to be chased up a tree by a bear." To my sick and

confused mind this sounded sensible.

Others, who had been helped by the clinic, advised me to go there. One man, to whom I quoted the 'bear' illustration, said, "Look, son, if you are ever chased up a tree by a bear, and a man comes along with a rifle, able and ready to save your life by shooting that bear, are you going to tell him to run along and not come back until he himself has been chased up a tree by a bear?" Only then did I see the utter absurdity of the argument, and to this day I have good reason to thank God for that clinic as well as for AA.

We all know (Bill and others have said so, and the Big Book says so) that there are some for whom AA does not work. There

are others, and these are many, who are not yet ready for AA, but who will go to a clinic because of the professional, clinical atmosphere. These men and women, in their hundreds and thousands, do frequently find themselves in AA, long before they would otherwise have made it, having been introduced to AA members and encouraged to join AA by a clinic staff.

Bill says, "Some of us AAs decry every attempt at therapy, save our own." How tragically true.

Just last week I heard a man declaim pontifically, "There's only one hope for us drunks. There's only one place where you will find understanding and acceptance—AA. There is no other hope." Most of us at the meeting knew that man as a chronic slipper, one who knew all there is to know about AA, except how to stay sober for more than a few months. But the new-

comers could not help being impressed by his air of sincerity and authority. Unfortunately there are still many who would withhold sobriety from a suffering alcoholic rather than see him go to a 'professional.'

The Silkworths, the Tiebouts, the Shoemakers, the Clinebells, the Jellineks, and all those hundreds of others, are nonalcoholics who have helped alcoholics. There are thousands of highly-trained, dedicated professionals who have never so much as had a hangover, but who can and do, every day of their lives, help alcoholics to recovery. Let me quote once more from Bill W.: "More and more we regard all who labor in the total field of alcoholism as our companions on the march from darkness into light. We see that we can accomplish together what we could never accomplish in separation and rivalry."

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