

September 1996



A Big Book

Thumping

A while back there was a letter in the Grapevine complaining about members who referred to our Big Book as the only authority in AA. This brings to mind an incident which occurred in the late 1960s. When I was living in Bushland, Texas, I sponsored a fellow in the program whom I'll call Billy (not his real name). He had some trouble with the program in the beginning, and then he got sober. He was a salesman type, and he got better and better sales jobs as his sobriety lengthened. Eventually one of these better jobs moved him to Dallas. He immediately got active in a group in Dallas and tried to sponsor a rich man's son whom I'll call Jim Bob (not his real name). This sponsoring deal

didn't work out too well. Jim Bob never took a Third Step or wrote an inventory or made an amends list or even made regular meetings; he just called Billy when he was coming off a drunk. This went on for some months.

One cold winter night, Jim Bob called Billy at two o'clock in the morning, crying, "Oh Billy, I'm dying, I'm in terrible shape, please come down here to the Baker Hotel and help me get sober!" Billy threw on his clothes, grabbed his Big Book, and started from the Dallas suburbs to the Baker Hotel. He stopped by an all-night quick mart to get some honey and orange juice, and continued the long, cold trip downtown.

As he drove, he began to think

about how Jim Bob had been using him instead of really getting into the program. All of a sudden this made ole Billy hot. The further Billy drove, the madder he got. When he got to the Baker he was livid at ole Jim Bob. The elevator was slow, and that was the last straw. When Jim Bob opened the door at the knock, Billy threw the sack in his left hand (with honey and orange juice in it) into the hotel room, and started hitting Jim Bob on the top of the head with the Big Book which was in his right hand. After a half a dozen blows, Billy yelled, "You no good sonuvagun, Jim Bob, don't call me ever again until you are bone dry and ready to work the program that's in this Big Book!"

Billy turned and stormed down the hall, into the elevator, drove back home, went to bed, and slept better than he had in a month of Sundays. Two days later at Billy's regular meeting, Jim Bob showed up sheepishly with a written inventory — sober!

AA is a strange outfit 'cause the membership rules are so loose: just a desire to get sober, no matter how fleeting that desire may be. It appears to me that some hard-headed alkie have to have the authority of the Big Book used on them in whatever way their long-suffering sponsors see fit!

One final note: Jim Bob's been sober ever since that **night**... Billy too!

John Roy K., Chicago, Ill.