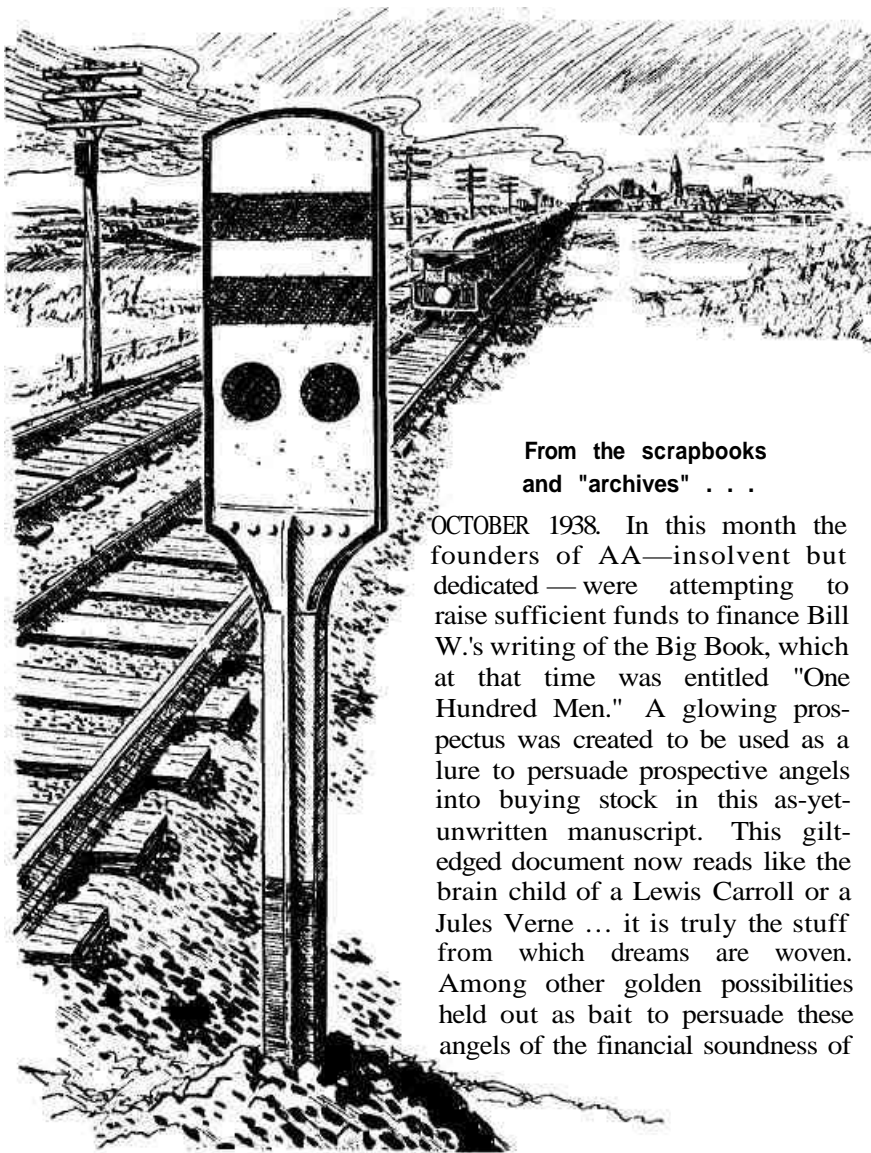


July 1957



From the scrapbooks  
and "archives" . . .

OCTOBER 1938. In this month the founders of AA—insolvent but dedicated—were attempting to raise sufficient funds to finance Bill W.'s writing of the Big Book, which at that time was entitled "One Hundred Men." A glowing prospectus was created to be used as a lure to persuade prospective angels into buying stock in this as-yet-unwritten manuscript. This gilt-edged document now reads like the brain child of a Lewis Carroll or a Jules Verne . . . it is truly the stuff from which dreams are woven. Among other golden possibilities held out as bait to persuade these angels of the financial soundness of

the enterprise, the following inducements stand out:

1. "This Week Magazine" expressed interest in running a Page 2 article regarding AA and its forthcoming book. The editor prophesied 25 to 30 thousand inquiries as a result of such an article . . .
2. "Readers Digest" in a personal interview between Bill W. and the managing editor stated that the work of AA and the forthcoming volume was of such interest as to justify putting a staff writer on it and running an article just prior to publication . . .
3. "Good Housekeeping" editor after a personal call by two AA members requested an outline of an article which could be used before publication of the Big Book.

(*Ed. note*—Not one of these lovely fantasies ever got past the wishful stage.)

Included in the prospectus was this uncompromising statement: "It is an indisputable fact that over the past *four years*, 100 *true* alcoholics have recovered, who from the standpoint of medicine and psychiatry were considered hopeless. These men have dubbed themselves Alcoholics Anonymous." It was on this record and with these prospects that our intrepid founders embarked on their plans to raise funds for publishing the Big Book.

BY JANUARY OF 1939 the results of

the stock-soiling scheme definitely indicated a need for a more stable method of floating some "eating money" and so Frank Amos, our great friend and one of the first of the non-AA trustees, sent out a dinner invitation to a group of *selected tycoons*. In it he stated: "The most important accomplishment, aside from redeeming alcoholics, has been the writing of 'One Hundred Men' by Bill W." The book was indeed now in the rough draft stage, but not a tycoon rose to the bait. In April, 1939 came a day of high excitement for the 100 men. "We the People," a tremendously popular radio program, scheduled the first AA program over the air. Its purpose was to promote the sale of the now published book renamed "Alcoholics Anonymous." Gabriel Heatter opened the historic half hour in his inimitable Voice-of-the-Prophet manner: "The man beside me has had one of the most gripping and dramatic experiences I have ever heard . . . if only one person is helped by hearing his story, we the people have done a real service."

It was gripping all right, and at the end of it our AA hero added the words the other 99 were waiting to hear: "Recently we wrote a book called 'Alcoholics Anonymous.' It tells precisely how we all came back from a living death. That's why I wanted to come on this program . . . to tell people in torment: they too can come back!"

## MILESTONES IN AA

Now we were in! Our little band of pioneers settled back to wait for the orders to flood in. After a few days the final count stood: we received exactly twelve inquiry cards. Two of them ordered the book, the other ten were poor jokes from doctors who clearly did not feel their practices were in jeopardy.

Shortly after this fiasco Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote his magnificent review of the book. It was reprinted many times and in many publications and started the first serious appraisal of AA.

IN OCTOBER OF THE SAME YEAR the Cleveland Plain Dealer published the series on AA that was to change the course of our history. The first

issue to reach the public read, in part: "Alcoholics Anonymous has hit town . . . Every Thursday evening at the home of some ex-drunk in Cleveland, forty or fifty formerly hopeless rummies meet for a social evening during which they buck each other up." This may not seem a very promising beginning to us today but, from this series, hundreds of inquiries were launched on the unsuspecting N.Y. and Cleveland groups, and the hundred men became hundreds almost overnight. By the end of 1939 over 2000 copies of the Big Book had been sold and we were on our way . . . the ebb tide turned to a flood.

*GV Staff, N.Y.*

