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*Bill's recollections of Sam Shoemaker, one of AA's greatest friends; also his comment upon the excellent recently completed biography by Helen Shoemaker called:*

## 'I Stand by the Door'

DR. Sam Shoemaker was one of AA's indispensables. Had it not been for his ministry to us in our early time, our Fellowship would not be in existence today. Therefore the recent publication of his biography entitled *I Stand By the Door*,\* so well authored by his wife Helen, is a poignant reminder of our great debt and a welcome addition to our comprehension of this magnificent friend.

First, let me acquaint our newer generations with the "Sam" we oldsters knew so well in the first days of AA, and in the years since. For this purpose I'd like to tell of Sam's appearance at our International Convention of 1955, held in St. Louis. I quote as follows from our book of history, *AA Comes of Age*.

"Dr. Sam looked scarcely a day older than he had almost twenty-one years earlier when I first met him

\* *I Stand By the Door* is published by Harper & Row, New York.

and his dynamic group at Calvary's parish house in New York. As he began to speak, his impact fell upon us there in the Kiel Auditorium just as it had upon Lois and me years before. As always, he called a spade a spade, and his blazing eagerness, earnestness and crystal clarity drove home his message point by point. With all his vigor and power of speech, Sam nevertheless kept himself right down to size. Here was a man quite as willing to talk about *his* sins as about anybody else's. He made himself a witness of God's power and love just as any AA might have done.

"Sam's appearance before us was further evidence that many a channel had been used by Providence to create Alcoholics Anonymous. And none had been more vitally needed than the one opened through Sam Shoemaker and his Oxford Group associates of a generation before. The early AA got its ideas of self-

examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done and working with others straight from the Oxford Group and directly from Sam Shoemaker, their onetime leader in America, and from nowhere else. He will always be found in our annals as the one whose inspired example and teaching did the most to show us how to create the spiritual climate in which we alcoholics may survive and then proceed to grow. AA owes a debt of timeless gratitude for all that God sent to us through Sam and his friends in the early days of AA's infancy."

No one, I think, can read Helen Shoemaker's book, *I Stand By the Door*, without being the better for it. This vivid and moving account of Sam at home, in his ministry, and in his public life is a portrait in breadth and in depth of one of the finest human beings of our time.



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