

April 1989

The Big Book: Before and After

It's a well-known AA fact that the Big Book underwent intense scrutiny and exhaustive discussion before reaching print in its final form. In fact, Bill W. often referred to himself as the referee of these "discussions"

BEFORE

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our directions...

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to follow directions.

At some of these you may balk. You may think you can find an easier, softer way. We doubt if you can...

Remember that you are dealing with alcohol — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for you. But there is One who has all power — That One is God. You must find Him now!

Half measures will avail you nothing. You stand at the turning point. Throw yourself under His protection and care with complete abandon.

Now we think you can take it! Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as your Program of Recovery...

7. Humbly, on our knees, asked Him to remove our shortcomings — holding nothing back.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after, have been designed to sell you three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That you are alcoholic and cannot manage your own life.
- (b) That probably no human power can relieve your alcoholism.
- (c) That God can and will.

If you are not convinced on these vital issues, you ought to re-read the book to this point or else throw it away!

rather than the Big Book's author. Below, excerpted from chapter five, are some examples of the changes that came about in the transition from the original manuscript to the published book.

AFTER

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path...

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not...

Remember that we deal with alcohol — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power — That One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery...

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.

(c) That God could and would if He were sought.
Being convinced, *we were at Step Three...*
