

## ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IS FOR ALCOHOLICS

Suffering from a terrible hangover co-founder-to-be Dr. Bob grudgingly consented to engage in a brief conversation with Bill W., an alcoholic stranger from New York. Bill elaborated on his dramatic recovery from alcoholism--the doctor listened for five hours! Dr. Bob especially identified with Bill's battle with the physical allergy to alcohol--and his mental obsession. Hope began to return--the evidence stood before him. Truly, one alcoholic sharing with another (about alcohol) can become fascinating business. If Bill's sharing would have been about drug addiction, or some other terrible problem, the conversation surely would have been short lived. As it were, this incident signals a founding moment of A.A. history.

When we identify ourselves as simply "alcoholic" we are abiding with the spirit of our Third and Fifth Traditions. But if we add to it we are indicating that A.A. has an opinion on different outside issues--such as drugs, etc., (see Tradition 10). Besides that, we separate ourselves from our fellow alcoholics. There is no need to do this. This custom came from treatment center rap-sessions--and that's where it should have stayed.

A.A. does not compete for membership with members (or potential members) of other 12-Step fellowships. Our co-founder Bill W. has written that he could see no way of making non-alcoholic addicts into A.A. members ("Problems other than Alcohol--Excerpts"). Non-alcoholics are invited to our open meetings for help and inspiration, but they will not become members of Alcoholics Anonymous. If you may think you may be an alcoholic, but don't really know, you are welcomed to attend all A.A. meetings. Our Third Tradition states: "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking," and "Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism."

In an effort to abide by our code of singleness of purpose most A.A. members (both open and closed) request that those in attendance confine their sharing to alcohol related subjects. The mention of other problems is often necessary and, of course, not taboo; but it is easy to see that alcoholic recovery must remain our chief concern.

Bill's recovery message to Dr. Bob was from one alcoholic to another alcoholic and it worked! That should never change! Let us forever keep this legacy available for the millions of alcoholics who will desperately need a real alcoholic to help in the years to come.