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Preface

This is the third edition of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous. The first edition appeared in April 1939, and in the following sixteen years, more than 300,000 copies went into circulation. The second edition, published in 1955, reached a total of more than 1,150,000 copies.

Because this book has become the basic text for our Society and has helped such large numbers of

alcoholic men and women to recovery, there exists a sentiment against any radical changes being made in it. Therefore, the first portion of this volume, describing the A.A. recovery program, has been left untouched in the course of revisions made for both the second and the third editions. The section called "The Doctor's Opinion" has been kept intact, just as it was originally written in 1939 by the late Dr. William D. Silkworth, our Society's great medical benefactor.

The second edition added the

appendices, the Twelve Traditions, and the directions for getting in touch with A.A. But the chief change was in the section of personal stories, which was expanded to reflect the Fellowship's growth. "Bill's Story", "Doctor Bob's Nightmare," and one other personal history from the first edition were retained intact; three were edited and one of these was retitled; new versions of two stories were written, with new titles; thirty completely new stories were added; and the story section was divided into three parts, under the same headings

that are used now.

In this third edition, Part I ("Pioneers of A.A.") stands unchanged. Nine of the stories in Part II ("They Stopped In Time") are carried over from the second edition; eight new stories have been added. In Part III ("They Lost Nearly All"), eight stories have been retained; five are new.

All changes made over the years in the Big Book (A.A. members' fond nickname for this volume) have had the same purpose: to represent the current membership of Alcoholics Anonymous more

accurately, and thereby to reach more alcoholics. If you have a drinking problem, we hope that you may pause in reading one of the forty-four personal stories, and think: "Yes, that happened to me"; or, more important, "Yes, I've felt like that"; or, most important, "Yes, I believe this program can work for me, too."

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