



COMMITTED TO RECOVERY

One afternoon 20 years ago, the buddies I drank with every night met me in my office after I'd had two, three, four, five, or six drinks for lunch. They closed the door and told me they felt that I needed help because I was drinking like an alcoholic. I looked at them with dismay and thought, "How can you call me an alcoholic? You're out there drinking with me at the same places!" It shook me up when they said, "No, not like you." Because after all, what we want to do is look good, so if we're not looking good, then it must have gotten out of hand.

I was one of those drinkers who always felt that I could stop when it was necessary. My mother used to say, "Don't read under the blanket with your flashlight. You'll ruin your eyes." Well, I felt I could just drink long enough until I needed glasses and once I needed glasses, then I could just turn off the spigot. That isn't how it worked out. I could not turn off the spigot. I was a daily maintenance binge drinker. I had a t-shirt that sort of summed up my life's spiritual beliefs. "A man has to believe in something. I believe I'll have another drink."

I'd read about the OAAP in the *Bar Bulletin*. Believe me, when I was thinking about quitting drinking, talking privately – like they advertised – is about all I was ready to do. So I went in to talk to them privately about my drinking. It saved my life. I watched a videotape of a doctor in a white jacket talking about the disease of alcoholism. When the doctor on the tape finished his discussion (complete with chalkboard drawings and people around a big table), I was asked, "Well, what do you think? Do you think you have a problem?" I knew I did.

And so, with the help of the OAAP and my spouse, I made an appointment with a medically trained professional whose purpose was to analyze whether I was an alcoholic. After talking to me for awhile the doctor told me that he believed I was an alcoholic and needed treatment. Little did I know, he

was a recovering alcoholic, too.

When I went into treatment, I believed I was there to learn how not to drink the way I'd been drinking. So I brought along a kit of all my hangover remedies – things like Vicodin and Empirin 3. The treatment center counselors had the nerve to search me and confiscate it all, which made me think that treatment wasn't necessarily going to be a real friendly place. But it turned out to be a good place for me to be and I committed myself to getting the maximum out of it.

When you go to treatment, there is a difference between being involved and being committed. Bacon and eggs provide a good illustration. The chicken was involved but the pig was *committed*.

I had a plastic hospital wristband and couldn't go anywhere without a "minder." The doors of my wing were locked – from the outside – and they were medicating me because they were concerned (based on my history) that I would go into convulsions when I stopped drinking. These "subtle" hints – plus the fact that I had a toothless 70-year-old pensioner for a roommate – led me to realize that perhaps I drank too much and should commit to change. I committed to the treatment program, and read the big book the first day I got it. I read it like I was briefing a case for law school – including making margin notes. I knew I drank too much. Nevertheless, I still approached treatment as if I would be tested at the end. Some of it seemed then like "repetitive information."

As part of my recovery program, I began to go to meetings. I found myself in a room full of other lawyers who didn't drink. One lawyer was helping another.

The "repetitive information" I received – plus the support of fellow lawyers in recovery – turned out to be my lifesaver. Now, more than 20 years later, both are still part of my life.

I pass along that lifesaving “repetitive information” to you: 1) Don’t drink. 2) Go to meetings. 3) Read the Big Book. 4) Have a sponsor. 5) Do the steps. One, two, three, four, five.

It’s a simple program for complicated people. It really works.

Truly Grateful