

Hank Parkhurst - N.Y.'s AA #2

Hank Parkhurst was a salesman, an agnostic, a former Standard Oil of New Jersey executive, who had lost his job because of drinking and wound up at Towns Hospital, where Bill found him in the fall of 1935. He was Bill's first success in New York, the first alcoholic in New York to ever stay sober even for a little while. (He stayed sober for four years.)

The first mention of Hank in the Big Book is on page xxxi of "The Doctor's Opinion." He was the man Dr. Silkworth described who "seemed to be a case of pathological mental deterioration. ... He adopted the plan outlined in this book." One year later Dr. Silkworth didn't recognize him.

He is also the man mentioned on page 136 who "was living in a large community." The community was Montclair, New Jersey, where Hank apparently had moved from Teaneck, New Jersey, where he was living when he first stopped drinking."

Hank was a red haired, tall, broad-shouldered former athlete with a salesman's drive and enthusiasm. He had at least one new idea a minute, and plenty of energy. Judging from a picture of him posted on the Internet, he was quite a handsome man.

After Hank got sober, he and his wife, Kathleen, traveled from Teaneck, New Jersey, every Tuesday to the meetings at the Wilson house in Brooklyn.

So enthusiastic was Hank in his early sobriety that one night when Hank, Bill and Fritz Mayo ("Our Southern Friend") were driving down Park Avenue in Hank's convertible, Hank suddenly stood straight up, and grasping the steering wheel in both hands and with the wind beating against him, he yelled, "God! God almighty, booze was never this good."

When Bill and Lois lost their home on Clinton Street, Brooklyn, it was to Hank's home in New Jersey that they moved. The entry in Lois's diary for that day read: "Left 182 for good. Went to Parkhursts."

Lois said that when they moved to the Parkhursts, "Hank and Kathleen started holding Sunday meetings at their new home in Montclair, New Jersey, and Bert T. let us continue our Tuesday meetings [formerly held at Clinton Street] at his elegant Fifth Avenue tailor shop."

By the time Bill and Lois moved out of Hank's house there were also AA meetings in Montclair and South Orange, New Jersey.

A former agnostic, Hank came to believe in some sort of "universal power," but he led the fight, helped by Jim Burwell, in the debate about God in the twelve steps, which resulted in the compromise "God as we understood Him" being adopted. Hank wanted to leave God out completely and refer instead to the "spiritual nature" of the recovery the steps were designed to bring about.

Hank had an office at 17 William Street, Newark, New Jersey, which was "the headquarters for a rapidly failing business," according to Bill.

The "rapidly failing business" was Honor Dealers, which Hank had conceived, according to one source, as a way of getting back at Standard Oil, which had fired him. His plan was to provide selected gasoline stations with the opportunity to buy gasoline, oil, and automobile parts on a cooperative basis.

Ruth Hock's immediate impression of Hank when she interviewed for a job at Honor Dealers was "that he had a vibrant personality, that he was capable of strong likes and dislikes, that he seemed to be possessed of inexhaustible energy -- and that he liked to make decisions."

Her first impression of Bill was that he was a person of slow, deliberate decisions and, she suspected, not much real interest in their service station business.

Ruth remembered very little gasoline business being conducted there. A lot of people dropped in to discuss their drinking problems, and on more than one occasion she observed Bill and Hank kneeling in prayer by the side of Hank's desk with one of these visitors, an Oxford Group custom when seeking God's guidance. Hank ran the business as Bill became more and more involved in writing the Big Book, which he dictated to Ruth Hock.

On page 149 of the Big Book chapter "To Employers," Hank mentions the "little company." He also mentions two "alcoholic employees, who produce as much as five normal salesmen." The two employees were, according to Lee C., Bill Wilson and Jim Burwell ("The Vicious Cycle").

It was largely Hank who was responsible for Works Publishing being created to publish the Big Book. He signed the stock certificates himself as "President." When Bill protested he said there was no time to waste, why be concerned with small details?

Eventually a post office box was chosen in one of New York's downtown post offices as the most central point of the whole metropolitan area, Long Island and New Jersey included. And it seemed appropriate to establish an office near this post office.

Backed by the book stockholders and by Ruth, Bill made the proposal. Henry, whose new job took him into western New Jersey, objected violently. He wanted to take the book business and Ruth wherever he went. According to Bill, "he was heavily beset with other problems, too." Bill may have been alluding to Hank's desire to get a divorce from his wife and marry Ruth Hock.

Hank's return to drink was preceded by a period of increasing anger, depression, and paranoia, during which his life fell apart. He took a job in western New Jersey he didn't want, and his alienation from Bill and the others seems to have begun when he tried to take the Alcoholic Foundation's office, and Ruth Hock, with him. Ruth didn't want to go, and no one wanted to see the office moved.

Hank had been in charge of Works Publishing's finances, and when called on to make an accounting, he was unable to produce any records to indicate where the money had gone. Apparently there was no clear line drawn between Honor Dealers, Works Publishing, and Alcoholic Foundation expenses, or even between expenses Hank incurred in conjunction with his Works Publishing activities and his personal expenses.

When he was confronted with this at a stockholders' meeting, he became very resentful and began inventing stories about his office being robbed and his records disappearing. It was at this meeting that Dr. Silkworth saw signs of paranoia in Hank and soon warned Bill that he might become dangerous.

Some blurring of the financial picture was inevitable when it came to Ruth Hock, who was simultaneously working for Honor Dealers, Works Publishing, and the Alcoholic Foundation, which were all headquartered in the same office.

Ruth said that Hank was an impatient man who was trying to pressure Bill into a pace that wasn't Bill's way, so he became dissatisfied and critical of many of the things Bill did and believed.

Part of his unhappiness, Ruth admitted, involved her. "Hank and I were interested in each other. I had at one time seriously considered marrying him." When Ruth finally decided not to, Hank blamed Bill.

The Honor Dealers office eventually was closed, and the office for the Alcoholics Foundation moved to New York. Ruth Hock was moved to the New York office, as was the furniture.

Eventually, the groups decided that the book profits should go to the Alcoholic Foundation, and that Bill and Hank should turn over their shares and those who had purchased shares were to sell them to the Alcoholic Foundation at par value. The fellowship would own and control the Big Book and all future publishing projects.

Bill turned in his shares, but Hank, who by then had started drinking again, refused to do so.

No one knows just when Hank started drinking, but Lois's diary for June 13 and 14 of 1939 indicates that Hank was fighting with his wife and was determined to divorce her. The entry for September 5 read, "Kathleen [Hank's wife] phoned to say she thought Hank was drunk." September 6 she wrote: "Hank drunk, phoned Bill in the afternoon." The September 7 entry noted that he was still drunk.

The problem of Hank's stock was solved when one day he showed up "completely broke and very shaky," according to Bill. "He pointed out that most of the office furniture still belonged to him, particularly the huge desk and the overstuffed chair."

The furniture had been paid for at least once before, but Bill agreed to pay him again if he would turn over his stock. He accepted two hundred dollars for the furniture and turned in the stock.

But Hank resented Bill's persuading him to turn over the stock, and to make matters worse, soon Bill was granted a royalty on the book, similar to one that had already been voted for Dr. Bob.

Hank's son said that Hank always felt he had been treated badly and that Bill had made a deal with the foundation that excluded Hank from any future share in the book's profits. The entire issue was clouded by the fact that Hank's drinking had put a wall between him and many members who eventually supported royalty payments for Bill.

Hank wrote a memo to Bill in late 1939, which is quoted in full in "Pass It On." It asked questions that echo still today, questions about the separation of a moneymaking business and work for the love of it, about individualism and the cult of personality that was already beginning to gather around Bill and Dr. Bob. Hank asked: "Did Jesus Christ have an office? ... Would money that would be spent on an office be better spent for traveling expenses for people spreading the good news? Will there be a Grand Pooh-Bah of A.A.?"

Some think that Hank wanted to be the "Grand Pooh-Bah of AA", evidence his making himself President of Works Publishing instead of Bill. Perhaps he was jealous of the attention Bill was getting as a founder of A.A. He wasn't the first and he would not be the last.

Bill wrote him a courteous but reserved response, which is also quoted in "Pass It On." It implies that Hank was drinking at the time: "Another point -- the gang would like you to come back with us very much. It would be helpful to you, to them, and most helpful to me. Even with respect to the book, it is difficult to sell your suggestions and ideas to people who sometimes feel that you are no longer one of them."

At any rate Hank finally broke down completely and went on a terrific bender, after four years of sobriety, and he "never again showed any real sign of recovery."

Soon Hank went to Ohio and began spreading vicious tales attacking Bill Wilson. Bill was grateful that Dr. Bob and Anne Smith disbelieved his stories, but many, especially Clarence Snyder and Henrietta Seiberling (who had never liked Bill) did believe Hank's tales. In Cleveland, some started calling for Bill's exclusion from Alcoholics Anonymous and even accused him of financial trickery.

In New York, they began hearing about several Cleveland groups that wanted to secede and break off all connection with Bill Wilson's brand of AA.

Finally, these stories grew so out of proportion that Dr. Bob and Bill decided to go to a dinner in Cleveland to discuss the situation.

When the dinner was over, the chairmen of various Cleveland groups ushered Bill and Bob into a hotel parlor, where they were met by an interrogation committee, a lawyer and a certified public accountant. The stories all came out. One claimed that he had talked to a trustee in New York and knew for a fact that the previous year Bill and Bob had divided sixty-four thousand dollars.

While they were shocked, Bill and Dr. Bob had come prepared Bill had brought with him a certified audit of all AA financial affairs from the very beginning.

It showed that although Dr. Bob was supposed to receive a royalty on the book, he had got none -- everything had gone back into AA work. He still received a stipend of \$30 a week from the fund John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had started, but that was all.

Bill had been getting the same \$30, and for the past year he'd been drawing \$25 a week from the book company. His total income was \$55 a week.

The committee's accountant studied the statement, then read it aloud and testified to its accuracy.

The committee apologized, and some seemed genuinely chagrined. They said they would squelch the insidious rumors, but this never entirely happened.

And all this grief for Bill -- who did not hide his hurt -- was caused by Hank, the first man he had helped to get sober in New York and who had been his partner.

Hank reportedly was at one time married to Clarence Snyder's sister-in-law (this must have been one of his several marriages after the divorce from Kathleen), and later Clarence worked with Hank selling porcelain mugs and figurines all throughout the 1940s. After Hank's divorce from Clarence's sister-in-law, the business finally went under and Clarence's association with Hank dissolved.

Hank did get back on the program for a short time later on, and remarried Kathleen after several bad marriages.

He died in Pennington, New Jersey, in 1954. Lois ascribed his death to drinking, and others have said he was also on pills. Sadly, it was apparently his disagreement with Bill that kept him from returning to the Fellowship.

Despite Hank's return to drinking, and the pain he caused Bill, AA owes him a lot. Without Hank the Big Book might never have gotten off the ground.

Ruth Hock said, "It wouldn't have been written without Bill, and it wouldn't have been published without Hank."

Hank's story was in the first edition of the Big Book.

SOURCES:

"Alcoholics Anonymous"; "AA Comes of Age"; "Pass It On"; "Getting Better Inside Alcoholics Anonymous" by Nan Robertson; "Bill W.", by Francis Hartigan; "Not-God, A History of Alcoholics Anonymous", by Ernest Kurtz; "How it Worked -- the Story of Clarence H. Snyder and the Early Days of Alcoholics Anonymous in Cleveland, Ohio", by Mitchell K.; and private communications from Lee C.

The following is the story of Henry "Hank" Parkhurst (the first one Bill Wilson sobered up in New York, and his partner in Works Publishing, Inc., which produced the Big Book) as it appeared in the first edition of the Big Book.

THE UNBELIEVER

DULL . . . listless . . . semi comatose . . . I lay on my bed in a famous hospital for alcoholics. Death or worse had been my sentence.

What was the difference? What difference did anything make? Why think of those things that were gone—why worry about the results of my drunken escapades? What the hell were the odds if my wife had discovered the mistress situation? Two swell boys . . . sure. . . but what difference would a corpse or an asylum imprisoned father make to them? . . . Thoughts stop whirling in my head . . . that's the worst of this sobering-up process . . . the old think tank is geared in high-high . . . what do I mean high-high . . . where did that come from . . . oh yes, that first Cadillac I had, it had four speeds . . . had a high-high gear . . . insane asylum . . . how that bus could scamper . . . yes . . . even then liquor probably poisoned me. What had the little doctor said this morning . . . thoughts hesitate a moment . . . stop your mad turning . . . what was I thinking about . . . oh yes, the doctor.

This morning I reminded Doc this was my tenth visit. I had spent a couple of thousand dollars on these trips and those I had financed for the plastered play girls who also couldn't sober up. Jackie was a honey until she got plastered and then she was a hellion. Wonder what gutter she's in now. Where was I? Oh . . . I asked the doctor to tell me the truth. He owed it to me for the amount of money I had spent. He faltered. Said I'd been drunk that's all. God! Didn't I know that?

But Doc, you're evading. Tell me honestly what is the matter with me. I'll be all right did you say? But Doc, you've said that before. You said once that if I stopped for a year I would be over the habit and would never drink again. I didn't drink for over a year, but I did start to drink again.

Tell me what is the matter with me. I'm an alcoholic? Ha ha and ho ho! As if I didn't know that! But aside from your fancy name for a plain drunk, tell me why I drink. You say a true alcoholic is something different from a plain drunk? What do you mean . . . let me have it cold . . . brief and with no trimmings.

An alcoholic is a person who has an allergy to alcohol? Is poisoned by it? One drink does something to the chemical make-up of the body? That drink affects the nerves and in a certain number of hours another drink is medically demanded? And so the vicious cycle is started? An ever-smaller amount of time between drinks to stop those screaming, twitching, invisible wires called nerves?

I know that history Doc . . . how the spiral tightens . . . a drink . . . unconscious . . . awake . . . drink . . . unconscious . . . poured into the hospital . . . suffer the agonies of hell . . . the shakes . . . thoughts running wild . . . brain unleashed . . . engine without a governor.

But hell Doc, I don't want to drink! I've got one of the stubbornest will powers known in business. I stick at things. I get them done. I've stuck on the wagon for months. And not been bothered by it . . . and then suddenly, incomprehensibly, an empty glass in my hand and another spiral started. How did the Doc explain that one?

He couldn't. That was one of the mysteries of true alcoholism. A famous medical foundation had spent a fortune trying to segregate the reasons for the alcoholic as compared to the plain hard, heavy drinker. Had tried to find the cause. And all they had been able to determine as a fact was that practically all of the alcohol in every drink taken by the alcoholic went to the fluid in which the brain floated. Why a man ever started when he knew those things was one of the things that could not be fathomed.

Only the damn fool public believed it a matter of weak will power. Fear . . . ostracism . . . loss of family . . . loss of position . . . the gutter . . . nothing stopped the alcoholic.

Doc! What do you mean -- nothing! What! An incurable disease? Doc, you're kidding me! You're trying to scare me into stopping! What's that you say? You wish you were? What are those tears in your eyes Doc? What's that? Forty years you've spent at this alcoholic business and you have yet to see a true alcoholic cured? Your life defeated and wasted?

Oh, come, come Doc . . . what would some of us do without you? If even to only sober up. But Doc . . . let's have it. What is going to be my history from here on out? Some vital organ will stop or the mad house

with a wet brain? How soon? Within two years? But, Doc, I've got to do something about it! I'll see doctors . . . I'll go to sanitariums. Surely the medical profession knows something about it. So little, you say? But why? Messy. Yes, I'll admit there is nothing messier than an alcoholic drunk.

What's that Doc? You know a couple of fellows that were steady customers here that haven't been drunk for about ten months? You say they claim they are cured? And they make an avocation of passing it on to others? What have they got? You don't know . . .

and you don't believe they are cured . . . well why tell me about it? A fine fellow you say, plenty of money, and you're sure it isn't a racket . . . just wants to be helpful . . . call him up for me will you, Doc?

How Doc had hated to tell me. Thoughts stop knocking at my door. Why can't I get drunk like other people, get up next morning, toss my head a couple of times and go to work?

Why do I have to shake so I can't hold the razor? Why does every little muscle inside me have to feel like a crawling worm? Why do even my vocal cords quiver so words are gibberish until I've had a big drink?

Poison! Of course! But how could anyone understand such a necessity for a drink that it has to be loaded with pepper to keep it from bouncing?

Can any mortal understand such secret shame in having to have a drink as to make a person keep the bottles hidden all over the house. The morning drink. . . shame and necessity . . . weakness . . . remorse. But what do the family know about it? What do doctors know about it? Little Doc was right, they know nothing.

They just

say "Be strong" -- "Don't take that drink" -- "Suffer it through."

What the hell do they know about suffering? Not sickness. Not a belly ache-oh yes, your guts get so sore that you cannot place your hands on them.

. . . Oh sure, every time you go you twist and writhe in pain. What the hell does any non-alcoholic know about suffering? Thoughts . . . stop this mad merry-go-round. And worst of all this mental suffering - the hating yourself - the feeling of absurd, irrational weakness - the unworthiness. Out that window! Use the gun in the drawer! What about poison? Go out in a garage and start the car. Yeah, that's the way out . . . but then people will say, "He was plastered." I can't leave that story behind. That's worse than cowardly.

Isn't there someone who understands? Thoughts . . . please, oh please, stop

. . . I'm going nuts . . . or am I nuts now? Never . . . never again will I take another drink, not even a glass of beer . . . even that starts it. Never . . . never . . . never again . . . and yet I've said that a dozen times and inexplicably I've found an empty glass in my hand and the whole story repeated.

My Lord, the tragedy that sprang out of her eyes when I came home with a breath on me . . . and fear. The smiles wiped off the kids' faces. Terror stalking through the house. Yes . . . that changed it from a home into a house. Not drunk yet, but they knew what was coming. Mr. Hyde was moving in.

And so I'm going to die. Or a wet brain. What was it that fellow said who was here this afternoon? Damn fool thought . . . get out of my mind. Now I know I'm going nuts. And science knows nothing about it. And psychiatrists. I've spent plenty on them. Thoughts, go away! No . . . I don't want to think about what that fellow said this afternoon.

He's trying . . . idealistic as hell . . . nice fellow, too. Oh, why do I have to suffer with this revolving brain? Why can't I sleep? What was it he said? Oh yes, came in and told about his terrific drunks, his trips up here, this same thing I'm going through. Yes, he's an alcoholic all right. And then he told me he knew he was cured. Told me he was peaceful . . . (I'll never know peace again) . . . that he didn't carry constant fear around with him.

Happy because he felt free. But it's screwy. He said so himself. But he did get my confidence when he started to tell what he had gone through. It was so exactly like my case. He knows what this torture is. He raised my hopes so high; it looked as though he had something. I don't know, I guess I was so sold that I expected him to

spring some kind of a pill and I asked him desperately what it was.

And he said "God."

And I laughed.

A ball bat across my face would have been no greater shock. I was so high with hope and expectation. How can a man be so heartless? He said that it sounded screwy but it worked, at least it had with him . . . said he was not a religionist . . . in fact didn't go to church much . . . my ears came up at that . . . his unconventionality attracted me . . . said that some approaches to religion were screwy . . . talked about how the simplest truth in the world had been often all balled up by complicating it . . . that attracted me . . . get out of my mind . . . what a fine religious bird I'd be . . . imagine the glee of the gang at me getting religion .

. . . phooey . . . thoughts, please slow down . . . why don't they give me something to go to sleep . . . lie down in green pastures . . . the guy's nuts . . . forget him.

And so it's the mad house for me . . . glad mother is dead, she won't have to suffer that . . . if I'm going nuts maybe it'd be better to be crazy the way he is . . . at least the kids wouldn't have the insane father whisper to carry through life . . . life's cruel . . . the puny-minded, curtain hiding gossips . . . "didn't you know his father was

committed for insanity?" What a sly label that would be to hang on those boys . . . damn the gossiping, reputation-shredding, busybodies who put their noses into other people's business.

He'd laid in this same dump . . . suffered . . . gone through hell . . . made up his mind to get well . . . studied alcoholism . . . Jung . . . Blank Medical Foundation . . . asylums . . . Hopkins . . . many said incurable disease . . . impossible . . . nearly all known cures had been through religion . . . revolted him . . . made a study of religion . . . more he studied the more it was bunk to him . . . not understandable . . . self-hypnotism . . . and then the thought hit him that people had it all twisted up. They were trying to pour everyone into moulds, put a tag on them, and tell them what they had to do and how they had to do it, for the salvation of their own souls. When as a matter of fact people were through worrying about their souls, they wanted action right here and now. A lot of tripe was usually built up around the simplest and most beautiful ideas in the world.

And how did he put the idea . . . bunk . . . bunk . . . why in hell am I still thinking about him . . . in hell . . . that's good . . . I am in hell. He said: "I came to the conclusion that there is SOMETHING. I know not what it is, but It is bigger than I. If I will acknowledge It, if I will humble myself, if I will give in and bow in submission to that SOMETHING and then try to lead a life as fully in accord with my idea of good as possible, I will be in tune." And later the word good contracted in his mind to God.

But mister, I can't see any guy with long white whiskers up there just waiting for me to make a plea . . . and what did he answer . . . said I was trying to complicate it . . . why did I insist on making It human . . . all I had to do was believe in some power greater than myself and knuckle down to It . . . and I said maybe, but tell me mister why are you wasting your time up here? Don't hand me any bunk about it being more blessed to give than to receive . . . asked him what this thing cost and he laughed. He said it wasn't a waste of time . . . in doping it out he had thought of something somebody had said. A person never knew a lesson until he tried to pass it on to someone else. And that he had found out every time he tried to pass this on It became more vivid to him. So if we wanted to get hard boiled about it, he owed me, I didn't owe him. That's a new slant . . . the guy's crazy as a loon . . . get away from him brain . . . picture me going around telling other people how to run their lives . . . if I could only go to sleep . . . that sedative doesn't seem to take hold.

He could visualize a great fellowship of us . . . quietly passing this from alcoholic to alcoholic . . . nothing organized . . . not ministers . . . not missionaries . . . what a story . . . thought we'd have to do it to get well . . . some kind of a miracle had happened in his life . . . common sense guy at that . . . his plan does fire the imagination.

Told him it sounded like self-hypnotism to me and he said what of it . . . didn't care if it was yogi-sim, self-hypnotism, or anything else . . . four of them were well. But it's so damn hypocritical . . . I get beat every other way and then I turn around and lay it in God's lap . . . damned if I ever would turn to God . . . what a low-down, cowardly, despicable trick that would be . . . don't believe in God anyway . . . just a lot of hooley to keep the masses in subjugation . . . world's worst inquisitions have been practiced in His name . . . and he said . . . do I have to turn into an inquisitionist . . . if I don't knuckle down, I die . . . why the low-down missionary . . . what a bastardly screw to put on a person . . . a witch burner, that's what he is . . . the hell with him and all his damn theories . . . witch burner.

Sleep, please come to my door . . . that last was the eight hundred and eighty-fifth sheep over the fence . . . guess I'll put in some black ones . . . sheep . . . shepherds . . . wise men . . . what was that story . . . hell there I go back on that same line . . . told him I couldn't understand and I couldn't believe anything I couldn't understand. He said he supposed then that I didn't use electricity. No one actually understood where it came from or what it was. Nuts to him. He's got too many answers.

What did he think the nub of the whole thing was? Subjugate self to some power above . . . ask for help . . . mean it . . . try to pass it on. Asked him what he was going to name this? Said it would be fatal to give it any kind of a tag . . . to have any sort of formality.

I'm going nuts . . . tried to get him into an argument about miracles . . . about Immaculate Conception . . . about stars leading three wise men . . . Jonah and the whale. He wanted to know what difference those things made . . . he didn't even bother his head about them . . . if he did, he would get tight again. So I asked

him what he thought about the Bible. Said he read it, and used those things he understood. He didn't take the Bible literally as an instruction book, for there was no nonsense you could not make out of it that way. Thought I had him when I asked about the past sins I had committed. Guess I've done everything in the book . . . I supposed I would have to adopt the attitude that all was forgiven . . . here I am pure and clean as the driven snow . . . or else I was to go through life flogging myself mentally . . . bah. But he had the answer for that one

too. Said he couldn't call back the hellish things he had done, but he figured life might be a ledger page. If he did a little good here and there, maybe the score would be evened up someday. On the other hand, if he continued as he had been going there would be nothing but debit items on the sheet. Kinda common sense. This is ridiculous . . . have I lost all power of logic . . . would I fall for all that religious line . . . let's see if I can't get to thinking straight . . . that's it . . . I'm trying to do too much thinking . . . just calm myself . . . quietly . . . quiet now . . . relax every muscle . . . start at the toes and move up . . . insane . . . wet brain . . . those boys . . . what a mess my life is . . . mistress . . . how I hate her . . . ah . . . I know what's the matter . . . that fellow gave me an emotional upset . . . I'll list every reason I couldn't accept his way of thinking.

After laughing at this religious stuff all these years I'd be a hypocrite. That's one.

Second, if there was a God, why all this suffering? Wait a minute, he said that was one of the troubles, we tried to give God some form. Make It just a Power that will help. Third, it sounds like the Salvation Army. Told him that and he said he was not going around singing on any street corners but nevertheless the Salvation Army did a great work.

Simply, if he heard of a guy suffering the torments, he told him his story and belief.

There I go thinking again . . . just started to get calmed down . . . sleep . . . boys . . . insane . . . death . . . mistress . . . life all messed up . . . business. Now listen, take hold . . . what am I going to do? NEVER . . . that's final and in caps. Never . . . that's net no discount. Never . . . never . . . and my mind is made up. NEVER am I going to be such a cowardly low down dog as to acknowledge God. The two faced, gossiping Babbitts can go around with their sanctimonious mouthings, their miserable worshipping, their Bible quotations, their holier-than-thou attitudes, their nicey-nice, Sunday-worshipping, Monday-robbing actions, but never will they find me acknowledging God. Let me laugh . . . I'd like to shriek with insane glee . . . my mind's made up . . . insane, there it is again.

Brrr, this floor is cold on my knees . . . why are the tears running like a river down my cheeks . . . God, have mercy on my soul!

Nancy O.