

Dr. Bob's Last Drink

Bill W. had met a kindred spirit in Dr. Bob. Both men were born in Vermont, both were intelligent and both were alcoholics. They somehow knew that fateful evening in Henrietta Seiberling's Gatehouse home both of them were going to be okay.

After a few weeks of working with each other and attempting to deliver the message of recovery to other alcoholics, Bill and Dr. Bob did not appear to be discouraged. Despite their not being able to bring another rummy into the fold - they were staying sober. Quite a feat for Dr. Bob who had been attending Oxford Group meetings for a few years, even prior to getting together with Bill.

Dr. Bob was feeling so secure that he decided to attend a convention of the American Medical Association. He had not missed a convention in 20 years and did not plan on missing this one. Bob's wife, Anne was set against him attending the convention. She remembered previous ones where he had gotten drunk.

Dr. Bob assured her that he would not drink. He said that alcoholics, even those who had stopped drinking, would have to begin to learn how to live in the real world. She finally agreed and off he went.

Dr. Bob kept his promise to Anne. That is, until he boarded the train to Atlantic City. Once on the train Dr. Bob began to drink in earnest. He drank all the way to Atlantic City, purchased more bottles prior to checking in to the hotel. That was on a Sunday evening.

Dr. Bob stayed sober on Monday until after dinner. He then resumed his drinking. Upon awakening Tuesday morning his drinking continued until noon. He then realized that he was about to disgrace himself by showing up at the convention drunk.

24-Hour Blackout

He decided to check out of the hotel and return home. He purchased more alcohol on the way to the train depot. He waited for the train for a long time and continued to drink. That was all he remembered until waking up in the home of his office nurse and her husband back in Ohio.

Dr. Bob's blackout lasted over 24 hours. There was a five-day period from when Dr. Bob left for the convention to when the nurse called Anne and Bill. They took Dr. Bob home and put him to bed. The detoxification process began once again. That process usually lasted three days according to Bill. They tapered Dr. Bob off of alcohol and fed him a diet of sauerkraut, tomato juice and Karo Syrup.

Bill had remembered that in three days, Dr. Bob was scheduled to perform surgery. On the day of the surgery, Dr. Bob had recovered sufficiently to go to work. In order to insure the steadiness of Dr. Bob's hands during the operation Bill gave him a bottle of

beer. That was to be Dr. Bob's last drink and the "official" Founding date of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The operation was a success and Dr. Bob did not return home right after it. Both Bill and Anne were concerned to say the least. They later found out, after Dr. Bob had returned, that he was out making amends. Not drunk as they may have surmised, but happy and sober. That date according to the AA literature was June 10, 1935.

June 10, 1935 has been considered as AA's Founding Date for many years. After all, it was the date Dr. Bob had his last drink - or was it? Recently discovered evidence appears to differ with the "official" literature.

The "Official" Date

The Archives of the American Medical Association reportedly show that their convention in Atlantic City, in the year 1935 did not start until June 10th. How could Dr. Bob have gone to the convention, by train - check into a hotel - attend the convention on Monday - check out on Tuesday - be in a blackout for 24 hours - go through a three -day detoxification - perform surgery on the day of his last drink - June 10, 1935?

Five days had passed since Dr. Bob left for the convention and returned to Akron. There was the three-day detoxification process and then there was the day of the surgery. Approximately nine days had passed from when he left and the date of his last drink.

If the records of the American Medical Association are in error as to the date of their convention it is possible that June 10, 1935 was the date of Dr. Bob's last drink. If the records are in error, the 1935 convention would have been the only one in the history of the American Medical Association that was listed with the wrong date.

It now appears that the date of Dr. Bob's last drink was probably on, or about, June 17, 1935. Maybe AA should keep the June 10th date as a symbolic Founding Date rather than claim it as the actual one? Maybe the date should be changed to reflect historical accuracy?

Either way, Dr. Bob never drank again until his death, November 16, 1950. Dr. Bob sponsored more than 5,000 AA members (which if you do the math equals more than one per day in the 15+ years that he was sober!) and left the legacy of his life as an example. Dr. Bob told those he sponsored that there were three things one had to do to keep sober:

TRUST GOD, CLEAN HOUSE, HELP OTHERS.

More will be revealed...

Mitchell K.