

Did They Really Have a Desire?

Sometimes We Pick the Fruit Before its Ripe

By Rick R.

In the Foreword to the second edition of the Big Book in 1955 it says: "Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way: 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement. Other thousands came to a few meetings and at first decided they did not want the program. But great numbers of these--- about two out of three---Began to return as time passed". When I look at those figures I think they had a good success rate even if you do not add the stragglers who drifted back in later. 75% is not bad. In today's world we have been accused of having a poor success rate due to the number of relapses and we do see many people go back out and try the old game again. Alcoholics Anonymous does not publicly defend itself. I do not feel a need to defend A.A. and in fact, I do not even feel the need to defend myself when I am doing everything that I am supposed to be doing. I would, however, like to bring you up to speed on a few things that I have had the time in the program to watch as all this unfolded.

I came into the program on October 15, 1969 and no one sent me there. I came there because I had A Desire to Stop Drinking. I have never wanted a drink since that day. Up to that point there were no Rehab centers and the people that came to A.A. were desperate and had a desire to stop drinking. There were no Drug Addicts since the sixty's generation had not yet evolved enough until the mid-seventies for addicts to start showing up. In 1956 the American Medical Association (AMA) declared addiction to alcohol and other drugs to be a disease. There was only a small influx of doctors sending patients to A.A. until the Mid-seventies or later. Next, Courtroom Judges started sending DUI. Cases to A.A. to introduce them to a recovery option. My question is. How many of them truly had a desire to stop drinking?

Now, to be clear, I am not here to discourage any Doctor, Rehab Facility, or Judge from sending their subjects to A.A. just because I am concerned about the percentage of people in A.A. that relapse. Many of those sent here do get sober, many of them relapse over and over and for some of them it takes longer to surrender. The total number of people in the rooms is much higher and there are many more meetings per capita than there were before this evolution began back then and I have witnessed it all.

When I hear well established A.A. members joking about Spending \$35,000.00 on rehab and when he was released, they handed him a Big Book told him to go to Alcoholics Anonymous. I have been in A.A. over 50 years and I have never heard a single person say: "I've Been in Rehab coming up on 32 years." A.A. is a lifetime venture.

I hope that I have not offended anyone by the way I poke fun at the way people share their perception of the abysmal success rate in A.A. I also believe that we will continue to have these challenges in the future, but I believe that A.A. has a strong core and it will survive. As for the individuals that come to us prematurely through outside venues and does not get sober on the first try. The seed is planted. An old friend of mine who has passed on to a better place, when asked, "Hey Phill, why do we have so many relapses in A.A; He responded," Well, sometimes we pick the fruit before its ripe" Sometimes we do pick the fruit before its ripe, but we never discard it.