

Identifications & Background:

"The man of thirty" Page 32 (2nd paragraph)

It has been suggested with some regularity that Bill "borrowed" this story from the book, *"The Common Sense of Drinking"* by Richard Peabody.

There is one story on page 31 that speaks of a man 36 years old that had been drinking for 16 years and another story on page 107 regarding a man who gave up drinking to make a million dollars.

While neither of these actually match the story in the Big Book, the story on page 107 most closely resembles the story in the book. However, there is no mention of the man's age in Peabody's story, it took that man only "five years" to make his fortune and he died five to six years after resuming drinking versus the four mentioned in Bill's story.

Actual excerpt from *Common Sense of Drinking* by Richard Peabody (pg 107):

"Some years ago there lived a man who decided to give up drinking until he could make a million dollars, at which time he intended to drink in moderation. It took him five years of sobriety to make the million; then he begins his "moderate" drinking. In two or three years he lost all his money, and in another three he died of alcoholism. "

According to William Schaberg in *"Writing the Big Book : the Creation of A.A."*, "rather than considering Wilson's story a 'creative elaboration' on Peabody's, it is more likely that these are actual details from someone Bill knew from personal experience or whom he had heard about from the personnel at Towns Hospital."

The "Man of Thirty" **made a conscious decision** to resume drinking and the result was fatal. But what about the guy who has every intention on never drinking again – yet still does? *"What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink?"* (pg35:1). To answer that, Bill offers us the story of.....

Chapter Three: **MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM**
(pgs. 30-44)

"Jim the Car Salesman" Page 35 (2nd paragraph)

Ralph Furlong. author of the first edition big book story "Another Prodigal Story":

Another Prodigal Story -- Ralph Furlong
Springfield, Massachusetts? Darien, Conn.?
p. 357 in 1st edition.

Ralph had his last drink on June 6, 1938. He begins his story by telling of his last drunk. He and a man he met at the bar planned how they would convince his wife that he had been about to commit suicide and how his new friend talked him out of it thereby saving his life. That way, she would be sympathetic rather than angry at his drunken state. When the man started playing with a gun, Ralph got nervous and ran away.

Only the day before he had been in an accident. A Good Samaritan saw his condition and got him away quickly, before the police came, and drove him home. He was dreadfully drunk that day and his wife consulted a lawyer as preliminary to entering divorce action. He swore to her that he wouldn't drink again and of course, within 24 hours, he was dead drunk.

Several months previously he had spent a week in Town's Hospital in New York and came out feeling that everything would be all right, but soon returned to drinking.

The next morning was June 7th. He remembered the date because the day before was his daughter's birthday. And that, by the grace of God, was his last spree.

His wife, who had threatened to leave him, ordered him to get dressed because she was taking him back to Towns.

His wife pleaded with the doctor there to do something to save her husband, to save her home, to save their business, and their self-respect. The doctor assured them that this time he had something for him that would work.

Four days later a man called on him who stated that he, too, had been there several times but had now found relief. That night another man came. He, too, had been released from alcohol. Then the next day a man came, and in a halting but effective way, told how he had placed himself in God's hand and keeping. Almost before Ralph knew it, he was asking God to help him. Some alcoholics feel a strong resentment against such a spiritual approach, but Ralph was ripe for it.

The following day was Monday and one of these men insisted that Ralph check out from the hospital and go with him to his home in New Jersey (This may have been Hank Parkhurst.) He did, and the next night he was taken to a meeting at Bill Wilson's home in Brooklyn, where there were more than 30 men like him.

When he returned home, life was very different. He paid off the old debts, had money enough for decent clothes and some to use in helping others. He also worked hard for A.A. He is believed to have started the group in Darien, Connecticut, and at the time he wrote his story there were four in that group. He also may have been the Ralph who worked in the pressroom at A.A.'s second International Convention in St. Louis in July of 1955. ###

Chapter Three: **MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM**
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And with regard to the "peculiar mental twist" – in the split second when still sober (and sane) – that comes into play and convinces the alcoholic it is perfectly reasonable for him to take that first drink – Bill's graphic example of this strange mental deficiency is....

"Fred the Accountant" Page 39 (2nd paragraph)

Harry Brick. author of the first edition big book story "A Different Slant". He was briefly Chairman of the Alcoholic Foundation (early 1939)

A Different Slant -- Harry Brick

New York.

Original Manuscript, p. 252 in 1st edition.

His date of sobriety was probably June 1938. It is said that he sued to get the money he had loaned A.A. to get the Big Book published refunded.

Harry was an accountant. He is believed to be "Fred, a partner in a well-known accounting firm" whose story is told on pages 39 through 43 of the Big Book.

He was happily married with fine children, sufficient income to indulge his whims and future financial security. He was known as a conservative, sound businessman. To all appearances he was a stable, well-balanced individual, with an attractive personality who made friends easily.

However, he missed going to his office several times because of drinking, and when he failed in efforts to stop on his own, had to be hospitalized -- a blow to his ego. At the hospital a doctor told him about a group of men staying sober, and he reluctantly consented to have one of them call on him, only to be polite to the doctor. He refused help from the man who called on him, but within sixty days, after leaving the hospital the second time, he was pounding at his door, willing to do anything to overcome the vicious thing that had conquered him.

He soon learned that not only had his drinking problem been relieved, but quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all his problems.

While his old way of living was by no means a bad one, he would not go back to it he would not go back to it even if he could. His worst days in the fellowship were better than his best days when he was drinking.

His story is the shortest in the 1st edition. He had only one point he wanted to make: *Even a man with everything money can buy, a man with tremendous pride and will power to function in all ordinary circumstances, could become an alcoholic and find himself as hopeless and helpless as the man who has a multitude of worries and troubles.* Doctor Earl M. ("Physician Heal Thyself") described this as "the skid row of success," p. 345, 3rd edition.

Harry served on the first board of trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, replacing Bill Ruddell, who got drunk. Soon Harry was drunk, too. ###

= **supplied by Nancy O., the moderator of the [AA History Lovers list](#) and her friends.**

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