

WE THE PEOPLE

The Gabriel Heatter broadcast of April 25, 1939



The first national exposure for Alcoholics Anonymous came with the April 25, 1939, "We The People" broadcast. Gabriel Heatter's radio program was a tremendously popular program that was tuned in by millions of people.

Morgan R., the AA member who spoke on the program, was expected to launch sales of the newly published book, "Alcoholics Anonymous." How Morgan was prepared for his three-minute talk, and the resulting book sales are described in the A.A.W.S. publication "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age" on pages 174-175, and also in Post 225 on the AA History Buffs site.

This is a transcript of the interview:

"WE THE PEOPLE"

HEATTER:

The man beside me now has had one of the most gripping and dramatic experiences I've ever heard. I'm not going to tell you his name. And when you hear what he has to say I think you'll understand why. But after checking the facts the Listeners Committee of "We The People" decided to grant him time because they feel that if one person is helped by hearing his story, then WE THE PEOPLE will have done a real service. Alright, sir.

ANONYMOUS

GUEST:

Six months ago I got out of an insane asylum. I'd been sent there because I was drinking myself to death. But the doctors said they could do nothing for me. And only four years ago I was making 20,000 dollars a year. I was married to a swell girl and had a young son. But I worked hard and like lots of my friends - I used to drink to relax. Only they knew when to stop. I didn't. And pretty soon - I drank myself out of my job. I promised my wife I'd straighten out. But I couldn't. Finally she took the baby and left me.

The next year was like a nightmare. I was penniless. I went out on the streets - panhandled money for liquor. Every time I sobered up - I swore not to touch another drop. But if I went a few hours without a drink - I'd begin to cry like a baby, and tremble all over. One day after I left the asylum I met a friend of mine. He took me to the home of one of his friends. A bunch of men were sitting around, smoking cigars, telling jokes - having a great time. But I noticed they weren't drinking. When Tom told me they'd all been in the same boat as I was - I couldn't believe him. But he said, "See that fellow? He's a doctor. Drank himself out of his practice. Then he straightened out. Now he's head of a big hospital." Another big strapping fellow was a grocery clerk. Another the vice president of a big corporation. They got together five years ago. Called themselves Alcoholics Anonymous. And they'd worked out a method of recovery. One of their most important secrets was - helping the other fellow. Once they began to follow it the method proved successful and helped others get on their feet - they found they could stay away from liquor.

Gradually - those men helped me back to life. I stopped drinking. Found courage to face life once again. Today I've got a job - and I'm going to climb back to success. Recently we wrote a book called "Alcoholics Anonymous". It tells precisely how we all came back from a living death. Working on that book made me realize how much other people had suffered - how they'd gone through the same thing I did. That's why I wanted to come on this program. I wanted to tell people who are going through that torment - if they sincerely want to, they can come back. Take their place in society once again!

(APPLAUSE)

(MUSIC)

-- Thanks to Nancy O. of the AAHistoryLovers group on Yahoo!