

## Foreword to the 2013 Reprint Edition: The Origins of Twenty-Four Hours a Day

Inside his personal copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Richmond W. wrote his sobriety date, May 23, 1942, along with his name and address. On the opposite page he added the following note to himself:

Make book for morning quiet times—short passages for each day—on different phases of AA—Call it “Twenty-Four Hours a Day.”

The book he envisioned in that little note is the one you now hold in your hands. Richmond began the project in 1946, finishing two years later. Through the help of a friend, he had it typeset and printed at the local county courthouse so that he could sell copies for \$1.50. He distributed the book from his home, and it wasn't long before orders were coming in from all over the country, wherever *Alcoholics Anonymous* groups had established themselves. Some AA members maintained that they got sober on two books: the *Big Book* and *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*.

Richmond sold the self-published book for the next five years, donating the profits to his local AA group. By 1953 the book had sold out its third printing of 14,000 copies. With orders steady at 600 a month, the author could no longer keep up with the demand, so he wrote to AA's General Service Office. Would AA Publishing, Inc., assume the publication and distribution of *Twenty-Four Hours a Day* and

keep any resulting income? It had simply become too much for one man to handle, even with the help of other AA members.

It was only after his offer was declined that the author found the ideal home for his book with Hazelden, the Minnesota-based treatment center with a growing publishing division.

*Twenty-Four Hours a Day Comes to Hazelden*

Patrick Butler, Hazelden's president, had already come across the so-called Little Black Book. But, he later recalled, he did not realize the little volume's true power until he went to an Irish wake. "In Catholic wakes, quite often you will see entwined in the hands of the deceased a rosary or a prayer book therein," Butler said. "In this particular case, I was startled to see the *Twenty-Four Hours a Day* book in his hands. So you are able to see in what high esteem a great many people held that book. And it has been a great aid to a great many people—particularly a lot of loners all over the world."

In February 1954, months before AA declined the book, Butler had already written its author about Hazelden's interest in publishing it. Richmond had responded that should A.A.s General Conference decide against it, he would consider Butler's offer. And so that May, Butler wrote that Hazelden's board had agreed to publish it.

When Richmond answered, he enclosed the book's sales history and also seven hundred unsolicited endorsements. Soon it was publicly

announced that on June 1, Hazelden would take over the publication, sale, and distribution of *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*. While the contents would be the same, the cover and binding “would be of better quality and more attractive.” For a while the *Little Black Book* became the “*Little Green Book*,” but later, when Richmond told Butler that he felt nostalgic about the black cover, Butler ordered a return to the original.

Five thousand copies were sold when the book was released in 1954, eighty thousand by 1959, seven million by 1990, and well over 8.2 million as of 2013. Including translated editions, worldwide sales to date exceed 9.7 million. As a result of this book, Hazelden would eventually become the leading publisher of educational materials on addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery.

In April 1958 Richmond wrote to Butler, “Although I only compiled the book, I am naturally very pleased at its wide acceptance, even in places outside of A.A.” He continued, “If we can do something that will benefit just one person fifty years from now, it is worthwhile.”

Damian McElrath, DHE

Adapted from *Making the Little Black Book: Inside the Working Manuscript of Twenty-Four Hours a Day*

## ***FOREWORD***

*Twenty-Four Hours a Day* is intended for members of Alcoholics Anonymous as a help in their program of living one day at a time. It is designed for those who want to start each day with a few minutes of thought, meditation, and prayer.

These daily readings contain most of the material used in the booklet "For Drunks Only" and other AA literature; also some passages from the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

As a basis for the meditations in this book, the author has used many passages from the book *God Calling* by Two Listeners, edited by A.J. Russell. Permission to use the universal spiritual thoughts expressed in this book, without using direct quotations, has been granted by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York City.

The author hopes that these daily readings may help members of Alcoholics Anonymous to find the power they need to stay sober each twenty-four hours. If we don't take that first drink today, we'll never take it, because it's always today.

Look to this day,  
For it is life,  
The very life of life.  
In its brief course lie all  
The realities and verities of existence,  
The bliss of growth,  
The splendor of action,  
The glory of power—  
For yesterday is but a dream,  
And tomorrow is only a vision,  
But today, well lived,  
Makes every yesterday a dream of happiness  
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.  
Look well, therefore, to this day.

Sanskrit proverb  
by Kalidasa,  
Indian poet and playwright,  
Fifth century A.D.