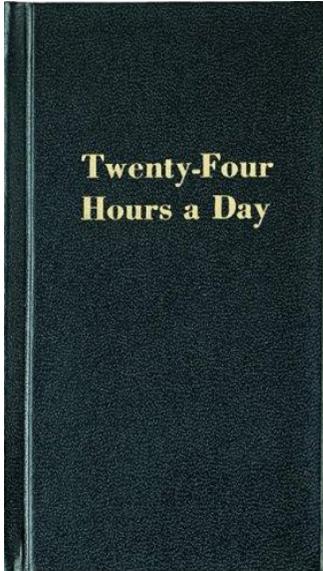


The Earliest Printings of Richmond Walker's **Twenty-Four Hours a Day**

By Glenn C. (South Bend, Indiana)



The three most published A.A. authors are Bill Wilson, Richmond Walker, and Ralph Pfau, in that order. Ralph, who lived in Indianapolis, became in 1943 the first Roman Catholic priest to get sober in A.A., and under the pen name "Father John Doe," wrote the fourteen Golden Books along with three other books, all of them still in print and read by A.A. people today. Richmond Walker got sober in Boston in May 1942, and later moved down to Daytona Beach in Florida, where in 1948 he published *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*, which became the great meditational book of early A.A. from that point on.

Rich (who had gotten sober in May 1942) first assembled the material on small cards which he carried around with him to use in his own prayer and meditation. But in 1948, members of the A.A. groups in Daytona Beach, Florida, persuaded him to have this material printed in book form, so the rest of them could use it too. He had some copies printed, and demand for the book quickly began to spread outside of the Daytona Beach area. Rich distributed them from his basement: A.A. members would write him asking for copies, and he would wrap them and mail them out. Past Delegate Bob P. (Goshen, Indiana) told me that Wesley Parrish, an A.A. member in Daytona Beach, was a County Commissioner and obtained the use of the county printing press to run these copies off. The county was paid for the printing, but this arrangement may have made it easier to print small batches relatively inexpensively. I was told that Parrish (whom Bob P. had met in the course of his A.A. activities) had come from Georgia down into Florida as a housing contractor.

Rich at first gave no indication of authorship. Everyone in that part of Florida knew that he was the one who had put the book together.

In later printings Rich added, at the end of the book, "Compiled by a member of the Group at Daytona Beach, Fla." As use of the little book began to spread rapidly across the United States, people in other parts of the country wanted to know where it came from. Rich, who always acted with the greatest humility, refused even to put his first name and last initial on the book, but simply indicated what A.A. group he belonged to. He wanted absolutely no personal fame, glory, or personal profit from the book. David W., the Florida A.A. archivist, says that if at some points the book distribution earned a slight profit, Rich immediately donated all of it to A.A.

But putting the name of the group on the book was important, because the rule in old-time A.A. was that a pamphlet or book which was sponsored by any one A.A. group was automatically considered appropriate for use by other A.A. groups -- any other group which chose to do so could read from it in meetings and employ it for beginners lessons and so on, simply on the grounds that it had been officially supported by the A.A. group where it was originally written. So the simple statement that the publication of this meditational book had been backed by the Daytona Beach A.A. groups was extremely important.

A.A. groups started using *Twenty-Four Hours a Day* to read from in their meetings all over the United States, and individual members began buying copies of the little book to carry with them throughout the day in a pocket or a purse. At least half of the A.A. members in the United States owned a copy before very long. Any number of good old-timers have told me that they got sober off of two books: the Big Book and the *Twenty-Four Hour* book. In fact, one of the best A.A. historians has estimated that there was a period when more A.A. members owned a copy of Rich's book than owned their own personal copy of the Big Book (the Big Book was rather expensive for many).

As demand for the little book continued to increase, Rich found that he was not able to keep up with packaging and mailing the thousands of copies that were now being distributed. In 1954, the year Rich turned 62, Patrick Butler at Hazelden, who had heard of the problems Rich was now having keeping up with the demand, offered to take over the printing and distribution of the book.

It is important to realize that Hazelden was not even started until 1949, the year after Rich had published *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*. Rich had no connection with Hazelden or Minnesota at all, and his little book of meditations was definitely not a statement of the Minnesota Model of alcoholism treatment. And even here in 1954, Hazelden was still not much more than a large farmhouse on a Minnesota farm.

As William L. White notes in *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America*, pp. 201-2 and 207-8, the psychiatrists and psychotherapists did not really take over the Hazelden operation until later, in the 1960's -- their people basically won control of its administration in 1966 -- at which point their program began referring to "chemical dependency" and treating alcoholism and drug addiction as simply versions of the same addictive tendency (which could be treated in the same group setting by identical methods), and so on, in ways that many A.A. old-timers objected to strongly. Richmond Walker was already dead by then (he died in 1965) -- his book is most definitely NOT a statement of what the A.A. oldtimers sometimes call the "treatment center mentality" in the pejorative sense. White's book can be obtained from Chestnut Health Systems, 720 West Chestnut St., Bloomington, Illinois 61701, toll free phone number 888-547-8271.

The first Hazelden printing which came out in 1954 had a dark green cover. At the back of the book, the last page (page 372) followed the format set in Rich's later printings by not giving Rich's name in any form (not even first name and last initial, or a pseudonym), but by instead simply saying that the book was sponsored by the A.A. groups in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Rich died on March 25, 1965, with 22 years of sobriety. His humble desire for anonymity meant that A.A. people soon forgot who had written *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*, but he left behind for the A.A. people whom he wished to serve, the greatest classic of early A.A. spirituality. Step 11 said "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out," but the Big Book gave no detailed information about how prayer and meditation of this sort needed to be done. Rich supplied that need, and grateful A.A. people everywhere seized upon his little book as their guide to living sober and remaining in constant contact with the source of healing grace on a day-by-day basis.