

White, W., Budnick, C. & Pickard, B. (2011) Jimmy K. and the founding of Narcotics Anonymous (Book Review) Cathie Kinnon Linder with Rob Roehm. *Every Addict's Friend, Jimmy K.: Reflections of a Daughter*. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 29(2), 176-178.

Cathie Kinnon Linder with Rob Roehm. *Every Addict's Friend Jimmy K.: Reflections of a Daughter*. Medford, Oregon: Linder and Roehm, 2010, 203 pages, \$35 (hardback). ISBN 978-557-41132-0.

Addiction recovery mutual aid societies have a long history and have grown prolifically over the past quarter century. Interest in the historical roots of such societies and the lives of their founders has heightened in tandem with their growth, international dispersion, and their influence on the professional treatment of addiction. There has been a recent flood of biographies of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) co-founder Bill Wilson (Cheever, 2005; Hartigan, 2001; Raphael, 2000; Wilson, 2000) and other key figures in the early history of AA (Brown & Brown, 2001; Darrah, 2001; Mitchell, 2002), and the founders of many secular and religious alternatives to AA also have authored texts that contain glimmers of their personal stories (Christopher, 1989; Kirkpatrick, 1986; Kishline, 1994; Trimpey, 1989). A noteworthy vacuum that has existed within this genre of recovery literature is the absence of a biography of Jimmy K., the most singular figure in the history of Narcotics Anonymous (NA). NA has lacked a scholarly history comparable to Kurtz's *Not-GOD: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* (1979, 1991), and existing histories such as *Miracles Happen* (NAWS, 1998) and Bob Stone's *My Years with NA* (1997) portray little of Jimmy K.'s personal history and character. This omission in the recovery literature is significant in light of the current dispersion of more than 58,000 regular NA meetings in over 130 countries (NAWS, 2010).

Partially filling this vacuum is a new book by Cathie Kinnon Linder that tells Jimmy's story through the eyes of his daughter and through the recollections of those who knew Jimmy within the NA fellowship. *Every Addict's Friend* is really two books. The first half of the book conveys Jimmy's family history and his history of addiction and recovery as experienced by his oldest surviving child. The themes here are poignant ones: the terror evoked in children by parental addiction, the miracle of parental recovery, and the sustained feeling of abandonment that children of recovering parents can sometimes continue to experience—particularly when that parent is a central leader within a new recovery movement (See Smith & Windows, 1992). Cathie Linder describes that even with her

father's recovery, she still lost him, but "the world gained Jimmy K." A particularly haunting aspect of this book is the inclusion of Cathie Linder's own recovery story—a story that left the reviewers uplifted by her personal triumph, but feeling that as a field, we have failed to address the risk of intergenerational transmission of addiction in any systematic way. We are in desperate need of interventions that support a more focused and sustained family recovery process capable of enhancing the resistance and resilience of children whose parents have experienced addiction.

NA members and future NA historians will mine *Every Addict's Friend* for previously unknown details of Jimmy K.'s life, but this book will find a larger appreciative audience of people in recovery and children who have experienced the addiction and recovery of a parent. There is very little literature on how children of key figures of the recovery movement experience their contact with these movements across their own personal development. This book is a valued addition to that literature.

Every Addict's Friend also describes Jimmy K. through the lives of those who knew Jimmy within the NA fellowship. These reminiscences provide additional detail about Jimmy's life within NA and reveal some of the intragroup conflicts that are typical of recovery mutual aid societies. Striking within this history is the level of personal commitment and sacrifice that is required to launch a successful recovery mutual aid society. Many people contributed to the birth of NA, but readers of this book will be left wondering what the fate of NA would have been if Jimmy K. had not devoted his whole life to its birth and maturation.

Beyond the tensions within NA early history, what *Every Addict's Friend* beautifully conveys is the contagiousness of recovery that exists within these movements. By all accounts, Jimmy K. was one of the most effective recovery carriers within the history of addiction recovery. As one NA member would say of Jimmy, "There was something very magical about the way Jimmy carried the message—when people got close to him, their natural inclination was to recovery" (Fawn B., 2010). Anyone with that kind of recovery charisma is worthy of study by addiction professionals. A good place to start that study is with *Every Addict's Friend*.

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