

Biography: "The Unbeliever"

Henry (Hank) P., New Jersey.
(OM and 1st edition, p. 194.)

Hank was the first man Bill W. was successful in sobering up after returning from his famous trip to Akron where he met Dr. Bob. Thus Hank was A.A. #2 in New York prior to resuming drinking about four years later. His original date of sobriety was either October or November 1935.

Hank was a salesman, an agnostic, and a former Standard Oil of New Jersey executive, who had lost his job because of drinking. He wound up at Towns Hospital, where Bill found him in the fall of 1935. The first mention of Hank in the Big Book is on page xxix of The Doctor's Opinion. He is believed to be the man Dr. Silkworth described who seemed to be a case of pathological mental deterioration. (Hank later became very paranoid and Dr. Silkworth warned Bill he might become dangerous.)

When Bill and Lois lost their home on Clinton Street, Brooklyn, it was to Hank P.'s home in New Jersey that they moved for a short time.

He and Jim B. ("The Vicious Cycle"), lead the fight against too much talk of God in the 12 steps, which resulted in the compromise "God as we understood Him."

Hank had a small business, Honor Dealers, in Newark, NJ. It is the little company mentioned on page 149. According to one source, he had conceived it as a way of getting back at Standard Oil, which had fired him. Bill W. and Jim B. worked there for a time and Bill dictated most of the Big Book to Ruth Hock in this office.

Ruth Hock said the Big Book would not have been written without Bill, and it would not have been published without Hank. And Hank wrote, except for the opening paragraph, the chapter "To Employers."

But Hank became very hostile toward Bill. Problems developed between them over the way Hank was setting up Works Publishing Co., as a for profit corporation, with himself as President. As a result of the feedback from group members, Bill listed himself as the sole author of the Big Book as a means of counter-balancing this.

There were other problems over money, and over Ruth Hock. Hank wanted to divorce his wife, Kathleen, and marry Ruth, and when Ruth decided to go with Bill when he moved the A.A. office out of Honor Dealers, Hank was furious. Bill paid him \$200 for the office furniture (which he claimed he still owned, but which had been purchased from him earlier), in exchange for Hank turning over his stock in Works Publishing, as all the others had done. Hank then went to Cleveland to try to start problems for Bill there.

No one knows exactly when Hank had started drinking again, but in the diary Lois W. kept there are various September 1939 entries that mention that Hank was drunk. He did get back on the program for a short time at some later date but it didn't last.

Nevertheless, A.A. owes Hank a debt of gratitude for his many contributions during his all too short period of sobriety.

He died after a long illness at Glenwood Sanitarium in Trenton, New Jersey, on January 18, 1954, at the age of fifty-seven. Lois W. ascribed his death to drinking. Funeral services were held Thursday, January 22 at Blackwell Memorial Home. Rev. A. Kenneth Magner of the First Presbyterian Church performed the service.

At the time of his death he and his wife, Kathleen Nixon P. (whom he had remarried after two failed marriages) were living at Washington-Crossing Road, Pennington, New Jersey. One son, Henry G. P., Jr., was living in Madeira Beach, Florida. A second son Robert S. P., was living in Pennington.

Special thanks to Ron R., of Kentucky, for information concerning Hank's death and burial.