

The GRAPEVINE

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The national monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, with the hope that it will help all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.

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A. A. Is Bridge to Happy Living

From New York, N.Y.

THE Alcoholic Anonymous Program is a bridge from the negative or egocentric personality of the sick alcoholic to the more desirable affirmative personality of the sober man, Dr. Harry M. Thiebout, physician in charge of Blythwood Hospital, Old Greenwich, Conn., believes.

"An incident that happened 25 years ago when I was an interne, explains to me, the alcoholic personality," Dr. Thiebout told an open meeting of the Manhattan Inter-Group recently.

Patients of the "quiet ward" in the hospital where the doctor was an interne became upset and jittery. The nurses on the floor told the doctor that the trouble was caused by a patient who claimed to be able to read minds—and seemed to be doing so.

"This of course was of great interest to me," said the doctor. "I couldn't read anybody's mind so it seemed like a good idea if I met the man who could. I called the patient to my office. I asked him how he could do this impossible thing."

A Matter of Muscles

"It's easy,' the man said, 'all you have to do is watch the muscle reaction. If a man is thinking "no" his muscles unconsciously contract and he pulls away. When he is thinking "yes" he is relaxed.' "

"It wasn't until this summer, 25 years later, that the full impact of that incident hit me," Dr. Thiebout continued. "When the alcoholic is sick, he is an 'aginner.' His mental attitude is one of withdrawal—his psychological 'muscles' contract."

The "aginner" cannot enjoy life, Dr. Thiebout continued, "No, I won't go along, I'll do it myself," is his attitude. He feels an apartness from others because of this inner refusal to go along. This person feels unrest, discomfort, tension, dis-

satisfaction. He is full of resentments and hostility.

In order to overcome these feelings he seeks happiness in excitement and liquor is one outlet. Then he becomes gregarious, noisy, opinionated, in his fear of becoming a "Mr. Milquetoast." This person, too, may become overconscientious—he is selfish and full of guilt.

"The 'aginner,'" said Dr. Thiebout, "has no

acceptance of life and the world as it is. He hasn't a chance of living on a 24 hour program. Why doesn't this man give up? Because he has will power—he can fight the world, alone—he thinks."

The more desirable, affirmative personality is quieter and feels fewer compulsions. He shares in fellowship and feels less guilt. This man is even-tempered and has learned to take things in his stride. He has an affirmative enjoyment of life as it is. He no longer demands that life produce thus-and-so. He's no longer trying to whip the world single handed.

"The Alcoholics Anonymous Program," Dr. Thiebout continued, "tends to produce the 'Yes' state of mind.

Admits It

"In your 1st Step the alcoholic admits that his life has become unmanageable. He can't whip the world alone—and admits it. Then in the 2nd Step, he reiterates; admitting that he cannot manage his life himself, he asks for help from the Power greater than he. He reminds himself of this constantly.

"By attending group meetings he gradually loses the feeling of aloneness—he is no longer set apart. He has become an integral part of a group of people, enjoying their activities with them; he belongs.

"By doing 12th Step work the man or woman begins to 'sell' someone else and, by so doing, sells himself for what he is.

"The person on the A.A. Program then begins to say 'yes' to the kind of person he is. He takes a moral inventory and when he begins to say 'yes' he begins to grow.

"Then as he begins to grow, he says 'yes' to God. Thy will be done. Through this he gains humbleness and humility," Dr. Thiebout emphasized.

Convention Dates Set

The third annual Texas Conference and Southwest Convention of A.A. will be held in Austin, Texas, on June 18, 19 and 20.

The second annual Virginia State Assembly of A.A. will be held in Norfolk, Va., on May 28, 29 and 30, with the Tidewater Group acting as host. Headquarters will be at the Monticello Hotel where registration will begin May 28. Highlighting the Assembly will be a banquet on Saturday evening when outstanding speakers are scheduled to appear. All members of A.A. are invited.

The Southeastern Regional Convention will be held in Jacksonville, Fla., on September 3 and 4. Convention headquarters will be at the George Washington Hotel where registration will begin September 2. All communications may be addressed to Southeastern Regional Convention of A.A., P.O. Box 621, Jacksonville, Fla.

EDITORIAL:

On the 6th Tradition

By Bill

The sixth of our 12 Points of A.A. Tradition is deemed so important that it states at length the relation of the A.A. movement to money and property.

Too detailed to print here, this Tradition declares in substance that the accumulation of money, properly and the unwanted personal authority so often generated by material wealth comprise a cluster of serious hazards against which an A.A. group must ever be on guard.

Tradition 6 also enjoins the group never to go into business nor ever to lend the A.A. name or money credit to any "outside" enterprise, no matter how good. Strongly expressed is the opinion that even clubs should not bear the A.A. name; that they ought to be separately incorporated and managed by those individual A.A.s who need or want clubs enough to financially support them.

We would thus divide the spiritual from the material, confine the A.A. movement to its sole aim and insure (however wealthy as individuals we may become) that A.A. itself shall always remain poor. We dare not risk the distractions of corporate wealth. Years of experience have proven these principles beyond doubt. They have become certainties, absolute verities for us.

Thank God, we A.A.s have never yet been caught in the kind of religious or political disputes which embroil the world of today. But we ought to face the fact that we have often quarreled violently about money, property and the administration thereof. Money, in quantity, has always been a baleful influence in group life. Let a well meaning donor present an A.A. group with a sizeable sum and we break loose. Nor does trouble abate until that group, as such, somehow disposes of its bank roll. This experience is practically universal. "But," say our friends, "isn't this a confession of weakness? Other organizations do a lot of good with money. Why not A.A.?"

Of course, we of A.A. would be the first to say that many a fine

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in The 12 Steps. The A.A. book of experience, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other literature, including The 12 Points of Tradition, are available through any group or the General Service Headquarters, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

enterprise does a lot of good with a lot of money. To these efforts, money is usually primary; it is their life blood. But money is *not* the life blood of A.A. With us, it is very secondary. Even in small quantities, it is scarcely more than a necessary nuisance, something we wish we could do without entirely. Why is that so?

We explain this easily enough; we don't need money. The care of our A.A. procedure is "one alcoholic talking to another," whether that be sitting on a curbstone, in a home, or at a meeting. It's the message, not the place; it's the talk, not the alms. That does our work. Just places to meet and talk, that's about all A.A. needs. Beyond these, a few small offices, a few secretaries at their desks, a few dollars a piece a year, easily met by voluntary contributions. Trivial indeed, *our* expenses!

Nowadays, the A.A. group answers its well wishers saying, "Our expenses are trifling. As good earners, we can easily pay them. As we neither need nor want money, why risk its hazards? We'd rather stay poor. Thanks just the same!"

A.A. Digest- Excerpts from Group Publications

Camel Club Chronicle, Marshalltown, Iowa: "We all know that A.A. is designed specifically for the alcoholic—but that other persons can and are helped by its teachings. Hence the A.A. wife and family are the first to feel the blessings and the greatness of the Program. To an A.A. wife it gives relief from fear and worry that is almost beyond words to express. However, I believe it is right to bring out that, in spite of all the fine tributes which are paid to the women who have stuck by their husbands through this trying period, she has usually become a quite neurotic person. I think you could almost describe her neurosis as "battle fatigue" and, like the soldier, she may have it even though she feels she is winning the battle at last. Consequently most wives need the Program as badly as their husbands and, moreover, they must believe in it if it is to really work for their husbands and for them."

* * *

A.A. Rebound, Asheville, N. C.: "We have heard recent talk about A.A. Tradition and that we should study and familiarize ourselves with the 12 Points. There may be some who immediately view with alarm and look around inquiringly to ask, "What's wrong?" There is nothing wrong. The ship is on an even keel. All is well. But do we recall our various school day (and later) vaccinations and their purpose? Well, that's what a study of the A.A. Tradition can be, preventive medicine. We owe it to ourselves and to the group to inoculate ourselves against any possible disease of disharmony or disunity. In knowledge we are forewarned and forearmed. The booklet of A.A. Tradition, properly absorbed, is a concrete vaccination."

* * *

The Sahara, Birmingham, Ala.: "A good way to 'stay away from liquor,' as your friends advise, would be to go either to the North or South Pole. Any good member of Alcoholics Anonymous can buy a friend a drink and yet leave it alone himself. He does not stay away from social affairs to maintain sobriety, nor does he urge anyone else to leave liquor alone. Nor is he sanctimonious. At a party, he'll probably have more fun than you if you are a heavy drinker."

Young Men Solve Meeting Problems

From San Diego, Calif.

In the January issue of *The A.A. Grapevine* there is a letter from Florence S. of Forest Hills, N. Y., asking for suggestions for the younger ages who need A.A.

In San Diego, this problem has been met by the formation of the Young Women's Group (under 35), and the Young Men's Group (under 40). These groups have been very successful and seem to have tapped an unending source of new A.A.s.

The young men seemed to have the idea, "Hell, if I was as old as John Doe, I'd quit drinking, too." It was rather disheartening to listen to someone tell of 20 years of hard drinking, and realize that we had five or ten years to go before we could even approximate the same low bottom.

These "old goats" gave us the idea we had to hit several cures, try a few types of "goof balls," and have at least two or more trips to psychopathic wards, before we were ready for A.A. It gave us the feeling we couldn't make the Program because we hadn't been knocked around enough.

The first accomplishment noted by the Young Men's Group soon became its strongest selling point: It had automatically raised the level for the young man's turning point.

The older person's problems are greatly different from ours. There was no education on

things alcoholic when they were our age, therefore they had to go down until their hand was forced. We have been fortunate in having the subject discussed in almost each magazine we read these days. Their immediate families are usually better established so far as understanding goes, because they have been married for a much longer period. The average young man is just beginning his family life and it is often harder to get his wife to go along in the new way of life. The young wife is more apt to resent the husband's attendance at closed meetings.

The vast majority of our members are combat veterans with some horrible memories in their minds. The older members have the same memories but time does do a lot to erase the strength of such thoughts. Only a few of us have seen prohibition days, but a lot of us have put away a surprising amount of GI alcohol, de-icer fluid (that was what we distilled in the Air Corps, and it wasn't too bad *then*), saki, and other drinks that are native to Hawaii, China, the Philippines and other Pacific Islands.

The younger man has an inherent cockiness that gives him a bit of trouble once in a while. There are quite a few problems that confront the young man of today; problems that the "old goats" must have had but have now forgotten. These problems and many others, we believe, can best be solved by a Young Men's Group.

The first meeting of the Young Men's Group was held October 31, 1946, with six young men and 20 of the older men in attendance. The second meeting saw 15 young fellows and 23 "old goats" attending. The "old goats" stayed with us for three months, by which time we had such a large attendance it was necessary to form a new meeting. Left on our own, we changed to roundtable type meetings and outlawed any applause for the speakers. The newer men soon found it was quite easy to speak since it was no longer necessary to stand in front of an audience. Also, some of the quieter men found it easy to question the speaker since it wasn't necessary to address the chair.

Questioning and general discussions led to deeper explanations, better understanding and, generally speaking, better working of the A.A. Program. The younger fellows strike right at the heart of any problem placed before them, and Heaven help the person who isn't serious when he offers a problem or question for discussion and possible solution. We let our hair down in no uncertain manner with no holds barred. There are times when we have asked for help from the older members because of their greater experience in handling some particular problem.

On the whole, our group has been a great success. Some of the boys have naturally dropped by the wayside, but most of these have re-enlisted in A.A. and are now doing a splendid job. We have had quite a few drop out in favor of meetings nearer their homes, but this is a natural separation and we feel that our group has played a huge part in selling them on this new way of life. The temporary win and lose columns of A.A. will show our group with an exceptionally high percentage in the win section.

For almost 17 months, our active member list has averaged about 50 men and the average meeting will find around 30 members attending. Holidays have not affected our attendance. Rather, it has been found that the men are glad that their meeting will be held on the eve of a big holiday.

The third Thursday of each month we open our meeting to the oldtimers and they are very welcome guests. They do not speak unless the leader asks for any word they may have, or unless one feels he may have a message of special benefit for the group. All business discussion of any sort, clubs, parties or what have you, must be left until the A.A. meeting has closed for the evening. The only ironclad rule that is never excepted: NO WOMEN.

We "charter members" are very proud of our group and its work, and certainly hope it will continue to grow long after we have passed on into the category of "old goats."—W.B.A.

There's One in Every Group

The wolf—or lady killer. This is the Don Juan type. He will tell you so himself. He is usually married and his wife does not understand him. Often he has a 16-year-old daughter who is so sweet and charming that it makes you wonder how she got that way, considering what she has for a father. The younger female members seek him out for fatherly advice and you can bet he takes advantage of their confusion. His antics soon make him the source of ridicule. Amused members pass the warning before he can do too much damage. Here he is giving a new prospect the eye.



VINO VIGNETTE—"Let's Keep A.A. Simple"

He would wait until the meeting had started and then come easing, almost slinking, in at the back and sit in the last row. Before the meeting ended, he would pop up and scuttle out.

He would talk to no one and he was really anonymous.

That was about four years ago. At that stage he was acutely shy, as uncommunicative as an Indian, skeptical and painfully conscious of being a physician. As a doctor, of course, he simply couldn't let it be known that he had joined A.A. If anyone did recognize him at a meeting and speak his name, you could almost see him shrivel.

He and I were once "guests" at the same hospital and he had told me his story, punctuated by shakes, after which I told him mine, punctuated by shakes. Among other things he told me that he traveled all the way to Mexico once looking for the ideal place where he would be able to drink "normally." He had picked up

the theory that he would be able to handle it if he could find the right altitude, and he was prepared to give up his profession and his practice once he found the alcoholic Shangri La. A few weeks later he came home on the train blind drunk. Even the mountains of Mexico had failed to provide the proper altitude.

He knew about A.A., but he confided to me from the bed that, "I'm a man of science and of course I can't believe that Higher Power business."

This "man of science," who incidentally was and is very able in his profession, had gone through years of torture. He had resorted to all kinds of treatment, including several spinal punctures, to get sober after binges. Fortunately he had never attempted to practice while drinking, but he had absented himself for periods from his office, and of course he knew that he could not continue to do that indefinitely and remain successful in the profession that he loved. He was lonesome, despairing, beaten.

Though extremely skeptical and virtually without hope, he persisted in coming to A.A. meetings. A.A., or that X in A.A., began to work, and the man who had turned inward began slowly to face outward.

The evolution of this doctor was one of those quiet but stirring personal dramas that are going on all of the time in A.A. Slowly the glum, tense face began to relax, and he would stay a little longer at meetings. He grew less taciturn and even began to join in conversation after the meeting, asking a few questions, hesitantly at first, but earnestly.

The tiny spark within became a glow that reflected itself outwardly. Today he's genial, quick, and hearty with his greeting and generous with his smile, excellent company, always ready to discuss the mutual problem whenever he thinks it will be of some benefit, and a believer in A.A. fundamentals.

As a physician, one would not be surprised if he were still pursuing the causes of his alcoholism and interested in the neuroses and the psychoses of it.

"I don't care about that," he will say. "I know I am an alcoholic and I know what I have to do to stay sober. That's enough for me, right now at least."

In simplicity he finds his answer, though he has the training and the knowledge to probe into the devious paths and by-paths of alcoholism. "Let's keep A.A. simple," he says.

So he goes along, "happier than I've ever been, drunk or sober," a man of science who found something that science couldn't give him and cannot explain, and that he finds no reason for explaining because it works.

Guam Calling

From Guam, Guam

We hanker for Stateside voices, and Stateside letters is the plea to *The A.A. Grapevine* from Guam. It is pretty lonesome out here so some letters or recordings would be greatly appreciated by the group on the island. The islanders promise prompt reply to anyone caring to write. Letters may be sent to: M.K.K., c/o USED, Station 15, Guam, Guam.

One Man Missing

Worcester, Mass., *Gazette*: SANFORD, Me.—The advertisement announcing a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous for tomorrow night in the municipal courtroom concluded:

"The judge will be absent on this occasion."

"After all," said the member who placed the ad, "we can't afford to lose our sense of humor."

Letters Ask for Bottle of "Cure"

"Enclosed you will find \$2.00 for a bottle of . . . Alcoholics Anonymous."

Judging by inquiries received at the General Service Headquarters of A.A. in New York City, some people think A.A. is a cure that comes in a bottle to be given preferably while the victim is asleep.

But others of the thousands of letters received at the office—P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex—are tragic, bringing desperate appeals for help. Still others, written after A.A. has done its work, are couched in words of gratitude and joy.

Added up, the letters present a stirring panorama of human drama, and their number continues to grow. Last year, the office received 21,989 letters and sent out 50,383 pieces of mail including bulletins and special mail to the groups.

In the past much 12th Step work was done through the mails. Now, since there are groups in ail parts of the world it is rare when a person asking for help cannot be referred directly to a group nearby.

Of the thousands of inquiries that come into* the General Service Headquarters each year, many are from families or friends of persons needing help. The women who answer the letters would much prefer to contact directly the alcoholic needing help and in many cases are able to do so. But whether they can or not, the letters are answered and often with gratifying results.

Recently the fruits of an answer to a wife asking for help for her husband came into the office. Over two years ago the wife had written asking how to contact A.A. in her city and how

to bring it to the attention of her husband. Her letter was answered and pamphlets were enclosed.

A few weeks ago came a letter from the husband. He had been reading a book, he wrote, and between its pages were the letter and pamphlets from the General Service Headquarters sent two years ago. He read the pamphlets, became interested and joined A.A.

Letters addressed "Anonymous, • New York City," and even some addressed, "Anonymous, U.S.A.," sooner or later find their way into the General Service Headquarters. Many letters are now coming from foreign countries from people who have received anonymous gifts of food or money from 'the U.S.! These are most always written in the sender's native tongue, posing a problem of translation.

In recent months, many inquiries have been received from doctors and members of the clergy.

Letters from groups are full of questions—how to raise money; how to organize; how to run a club house on no money—are common questions. Some ask the General Service Headquarters to settle disputes that arise from time to time, but no specific instructions are ever given. Instead, the groups are told of the experiences of others in the same situation so that the members may make up their own minds as to the best method of procedure. Any suggestions given are intended to be of the most service possible to the groups and its members.

Requests for the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* require only clerical handling since most are purchases.

Some People Are Much Sicker Than Others

From New York, N. Y.

"Some people," a friend of ours says, "are a lot sicker than others."

He was talking about a man who, after two months of sobriety in A.A., was now floundering from bar to bar. He was talking, moreover, about a man whose failure to maintain sobriety and whose typically aggressive alcoholic behavior had created considerable tension among his would-be companions and helpers.

He was talking about a sick man.

Our friend, we think, stated the case with rare insight and common sense. He realized that the man's drinking must have been a source of deep personal distress or he would not have come to A.A. He also realized that sobriety must have been even more painful, or the man would not have resumed drinking.

Here is a familiar problem; someone reaches for the Program, gets his hands on it briefly, but cannot hold on. What are we to do?

"Let him go," we sometimes hear; "he isn't ready yet." Or, conversely, "We can't give up. Let's keep after him."

We think that whenever a member slips he stands before us as a challenge—a challenge to our understanding and to the way of life which has brought us serenity.

Probably there are as many methods of dealing with this problem as there are members in A.A. One formula cannot fit all cases; we are individuals and are dealing with an individual. But it is certain that no method will be successful unless we make some attempt to recognize a slip for what it is—the anaesthetic of a man in pain.

It makes no difference whether he has been sober five days or five years. It does not matter whether you, personally, like the word "slip" or not, or prefer to qualify it as to duration and intensity. A slip means, in all cases, that a member is still sick or sick again.

When most of us came into A.A. we were relieved to learn that we had a disease. Everyone around us recognized that we were sick people, not pariahs or lepers. Furthermore, instead of remaining helpless before the onslaught of a dread moral decay, we set out to combat our enemy with weapons of proven effectiveness.

Yet somehow this idea that the alcoholic is a sick person seems to apply only to newcomers. The member who slips is too often put into a different category. "He should have known better," we are apt to think. And then our judgment suddenly grows near-sighted and we tell ourselves, "Well, he knows the answers. He'll come back when he's ready."

By this attitude we are adding to the burden of guilt that the "slipper" carries. And we have ample evidence to show that guilt and remorse,

the constant companions of the alcoholic, are doubled in weight by a dose of A.A.

But guilt is entirely foreign to the concept of alcoholism as a disease! What our unfortunate fellow-member needs is treatment and not punishment.

A "Platform Manner" Calls for Quick Exit

From New Orleans, La

The evolution of the A.A. speaker is an interesting phenomenon to watch and perhaps it offers a warning that has to do with one of the most dangerous bogs encountered along the road to recovery.

Most alcoholics have an aversion to platform speaking—that is, when sober—though they may do plenty of talking at the bar, with or without introduction, when drinking. By the time they're ready for A.A., they have little confidence, they're skittish and nervous, and they prefer the background to the spotlight. So it probably is true that in the beginning most A.A.s dislike giving talks at meetings and do so only because they know it may help some newcomer get started or some other member keep going.

Aversion to giving talks remains with some members, probably forever. But not so with others. Some gradually recover from their fright and actually get so they enjoy standing up in front and telling others how it's done. These are the ones who become perennial speakers. Theirs is the evolution that is fascinating, but disturbing to watch. These are the speakers who begin to appear more frequently on the platform, at this meeting and that, here and there, several times a month. Soon they're on the circuit.

Usually these people are good speakers and do a good job, and consequently are in demand. No doubt that for a time they help many with their talks. But for how long? And what does it do to them?

The danger, of course, is that any human being is likely to become spellbound by the sound of his own voice, and to begin to rate himself, subconsciously at least, as something of an oracle. Up sprouts the big "I" again, inwardly, even though outwardly the individual may appear to be oh-so modest. What goes on inside is important to him and it may not be good.

If anyone finds himself developing a platform manner, stretching his story to make a point and waiting for the applause, he'd better get off the stage quick, both for his own good and also for the good of his listeners who soon will detect the inevitable affectations.—*N.M.*

The treatment that we can offer is almost unlimited. It consists of companionship, patience, tolerance and the example of our own sobriety. Above all it consists of being convincing in our willingness to help.

We may listen and we may suggest but only rarely may we advise. Even though the cause of a slip is crystal clear to us, we can usually impart this knowledge only by indirection, by relating part of our own experiences. This is because the "slipper," for the time being, is entirely subjective; he is inside the picture looking out. He can see a fact as it applies to somebody else, but not as it applies to him. That is part of his sickness.

When we "read the riot act" to a brother in distress, we usually defeat our own purpose. In the first place, any criticism we make of him is of such a deeply personal nature that it is bound to increase his guilt. We don't lighten his burden; we add to it. Secondly, we don't offer anything new.

The art of helping a "slipper," it seems to me, lies in finding some part of the Program which he has overlooked, and then showing him how he can use it. The chances are he will grasp at something new, provided we make it real.

"The thing that cures a neurosis," writes one of our foremost psychologists, "must be as convincing as the neurosis; and since the latter is only too real, the helpful experience must be of equal reality."

For many alcoholics who have slipped and come back into the fold, the assurance that they were not rejected, but were awaited and later welcomed, was a real strength in a world of evasive unreality. This gift of assurance is within the power of all of us.

As our lives in A.A. have become dynamic, as our Program is positive, let us put some positive, dynamic and optimistic effort into our treatment of the member who slips.—*W.J.*

Thank You!

From Denango, Colo.

Alcohol has never been a problem to me as I have been a teetotaler all of my life. It has, however, come too close for comfort in my immediate family and we have A.A. to thank that it was no worse.

I am in the hotel business and see so many with a drinking problem. In order to in some way express my gratitude to Alcoholics Anonymous, I am subscribing to *The A.A. Grapevine*, and placing it in the lobby of my small hotel. I hope that in this way someone who needs A.A. may see it and perhaps become interested in its way of life.—*E.J.G.*

GROUP MEETING DISCUSSION PAGES

(This is a discussion page. Ideas advanced here are only suggestions, put forward to help furnish group discussion topics, without any intention of reaching fixed conclusions or dogmatic "rights" and "wrongs." All readers are invited to submit group discussion topics.)

The following is the conclusion of the questions discussed in the April issue of *The A.A. Grapevine*. These were among the questions canvassed in a series of seminar-forums held in Washington, D. C. The report is made by members of the Washington Newspaper A.A. Group, all seasoned reporters. It reflects no editorial or doctrinaire views except as they may have been expressed by the participants.

Topic: Sponsorship and Twelfth Step Work and First Forum. Bill A., Arlington, chairman; Bill C., Arlington; Katherine L.; Ray H., Chevy Chase.

Bill A.—A.A. does not pretend to cure any alcoholic but if one intelligently and diligently tries he can find the answer. I speak from experience. There are no graduates in A.A. but in getting this program there is peace of mind from here on out; happiness by helping the other fellow. Do we know of anything to do one's heart more good than rehabilitating a human life? A.A. is our opportunity to give God a chance.

Yes, there are disappointments, and some of these sponsorships pretty nearly threw Willy. Well, all watermelons don't get ripe on the same day but we can trust to God that they will get ripe before the frost gets them.

Katherine L.—I never believed that one day I would stand before such a tremendous audience and I feel that this right now is 12th Step work because I have received so much from A.A.—my life. Five years ago I worked for A.A., I wanted it, I needed it, I learned by trial and error, and now I try to give to others what helped me in my dire need. When I asked for help not to take a drink something seemed to flow through me, and I think that was a spiritual experience.

Now when I get a call I try to let the prospect talk herself out. I ask her to have faith in what I tell her, to be honest with herself and to stay dry long enough to hear what we others say. It's important that every candidate you bring to a meeting be introduced to as many people as possible; some other girl may have the answer.

About anonymity. Everybody in Christendom knew it when I was drunk. Its important that the new member understand her illness may be caused by resentments; and it's fine to find, after a time, that we can learn we are rather nice people to live with—our families, too.

Ray H.—I had a sponsor. If there was ever an element X used by psychiatrists when they speak of the spiritual, this must be it. After seven years of living hell, a 'phone call came

from a man I hadn't seen in 20 years. I told him to mind his own business and for the sole purpose of hitting that gentleman in the nose, I went to his office. He was out, but there was an oldtimer waiting there, and because I wanted something, I listened. As he talked, sincerely and honestly, I began to see something. Three weeks later my original sponsor sent for me. He had had a slip, but three weeks of listening at meetings had given me a story. It has changed my entire life and I will do 12th Step work ahead of anything else—it is the most important thing there is.

I don't know of any better sponsorship in the world than to take a bird who drinks, live with him, listen, and with the help of God, he will come through. Sure, there are a lot of discouragements and for moments we are apt to forget that we, too, are just drunks. But for me A.A. is my life.

Bill C.—We owe our lives to some one's sponsorship and we are dealing with the most sacred responsibility—the life of a man or woman. Nor should we let it throw us if we should try to play God; His idea wasn't to make one call and tap your shoulder when something right happened.

For the A.A. engaging in 12th Step work, the following considerations appear: (1) You must assume responsibility for your candidate. It's a critical time in his life and he looks to you for comfort and guidance; (2) does he know he is an alcoholic? (3) does he want to do something about it? and (4) does he want your help?

Don't be too arbitrary in your judgment. Remember the alky has been in a violent anti-social scene, and he is accustomed to surround himself with a wall to keep the world out. Try to be his friend. . . . Everlastingly put yourself in his shoes.

Bill A.—(Closing) Let's call A.A. crystallized Christianity.

Topic: Sponsorship and Twelfth Step Work (Second Forum), George C., Alexandria, chairman; Margaret S. and Eugene G., Washington.

George C.—We face consideration of the merits and demerits of "babying" as against the "cold turkey" treatment of newcomers. The question of prolonged personal sponsorship, whether workable or valuable, and in what circumstances, should be examined. The feeling is pretty general that the sooner the new person in A.A. comes to depend on the Program and the group, rather than upon any individual, the better. And I think it is generally accepted that it may be better to make a 12th Step call even if it does not come from the prospect himself.

Margaret S.—The importance to the newcomer of attending meetings, meetings and still more meetings cannot be overemphasized. He, or she, should be warned not to expect immediate release from the alcoholic problem, but encouraged to have faith that, having taken the 1st Step honestly, daily vigilance and sincere effort to understand and apply the 12 Steps on a 24-hour basis will carry him or her safely over the first difficult weeks.

It is neither necessary nor wise to emphasize unduly the spiritual aspects of the A.A. Program in the first approach to one who is likely to be rebellious or impatient, as well as mortally sick. In such cases, place emphasis on the effectiveness of the whole A.A. approach to the problem of alcoholism; particularly the value of example. The key to success of the Program is contained in the last part of the 12th Step—"we try to practice these principles in all our affairs."

There is no final word on the value of formal sponsorship. Circumstances and individuals vary. Certainly there should be recognition of a definite responsibility for personal assistance as long as it seems needed and helpful.

Gene S.—Excessive rules and rule-making, tendencies found sometimes in new and growing groups, are not too good. The importance of anonymity should be stressed. The prospect coming into A.A. signs nothing; the only requirement for admission to the fellowship is an honest desire to quit drinking. Early difficulties with the Program are no evidence that the individual may not become a steadfast member if he keeps on trying. Rules, regulations, charters, by-laws and the appointment of bouncers are experiments sometimes regretted later.

To the prospective member the protection, as he then regards it, of anonymity can be of high importance. He is promised it, and individuals in the group should see to it that the promise is made good. Granting there are two schools of thought on the subject of anonymity, still the decision to join one or the other should be left to the person most concerned. Every A.A. shares a great responsibility with all fellow members and to A.A. as a whole. If in his enthusiasm and gratitude a fledgling makes his affiliation known, or if an older member deliberately or inadvertently does the same, then a so-called slip by either can do great harm to his group and to an undetermined number of actual or potential members.

Protect the anonymity, do not take the first little drink, try to practice the 12 Steps in all our affairs—that way we cannot harm A.A., or others, or ourselves, and it is almost certain, we will do some good.

Non-Alcoholic Wives Form A.A. Auxiliary

From *Rome, Ga.*

In July, 1947, seven wives of members of the Rome, Ga., Group of Alcoholics Anonymous formed an auxiliary.

After several months of study and association together, we thought it might be interesting to set down our ideas. We asked each member of the group to write an article on what purpose they thought the auxiliary should serve, and one of our meetings was devoted to the reading and discussion of the eight or ten papers. The following is a condensation:

Humility's Twin Is Anonymity

From *Chicago, Ill.*

Alcoholics Anonymous could never have reached its present amazing rate of growth without anonymity and whoever plays lightly with this basic principle threatens damage to the movement, as well as himself.

It really is presuming a great deal for anyone to think that he is helping A.A. by proclaiming his membership, and those of others, up and down the highways. His train of thinking obviously runs along the line that because he is such a fine fellow, such a shining example, such a sterling character, he helps A.A. by letting it be known that he's a member. He has lent his noble support to A.A., therefore the movement must be all right. That's what he apparently thinks other people will think, completely forgetting that outsiders who hear him broadcasting will wonder what's become of the second word in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous. Then, of course, if he has a slip, which often occurs as an aftermath of boasting, he just fixes everything up pretty.

But the principle of anonymity contains a spiritual essence that is the most important of the several vital advantages it has given us. Anonymity is humility's twin. The individual who comes into A.A. expecting to be anonymous and who is content to remain anonymous, except of course in A.A. work with alcoholics, is practicing at least one form of humility. He is not seeking self-aggrandizement as long as he is willing to stay anonymous.

Anonymity gives encouragement to the spiritual works of helping others without anticipation of personal reward. It is a safeguard against personal ambitions.

Conversely, the fellow who is seeking personal glory must as his first step compromise his anonymity.

The principle of anonymity is a shield for the very heart of A.A.—*D.T.*

Knowing that A.A. is a fellowship of ex-drinkers banded together with an aim to help fellow-alcoholics recover their health and therein maintain their own happy sobriety, this auxiliary was set up to serve one, and only one purpose—to help the alcoholic's wife or other close relative to be better equipped to meet the situations that arise when the alcoholic affiliates himself with A.A.

Education in A.A. is essential to the wife of an alcoholic if she is to understand and be familiar with the program that is to lead her husband back to a normal life and sobriety.

The auxiliary must in no way take over the privileges that belong to the alcoholic fellowship, and never overstep the bounds for which it stands.

Every wife of an alcoholic has tried countless ways to sober her husband, but has met defeat on every count. Now A.A. has stepped in and is doing a job that she could not do.

She must now adjust her own daily life to coincide with the new way of life her husband has adopted. In order to change, she must learn thoroughly and unselfishly, what she must do in order to help—not hinder his efforts.

The auxiliary program should be a serious and effective one with a purpose and aim behind it, a program that will serve to aid newer non-alcoholic wives by an exchange of ideas and problems among members.

We should learn to apply the 12 Steps to our own problems of life. The alcoholic's wife

Syracuse Resume'

Like so many groups throughout the world, the Central Group, Syracuse, N. Y., is growing in size and strength. In so doing, it follows that small discussion groups feel the need of being directly affiliated with the A.A. General Service Headquarters. At the same time these new groups are not forgetting the wealth of friendship, faith and spiritual understanding gained through the warm fellowship of the Central Group.

Recently some excellent speakers have gone to Syracuse to give their interpretations of the A.A. Program. By extending invitations to leaders of all industrial plants, as well as members of the clergy, judiciary and medical professions, the group has been able to inform them at firsthand that help for the alcoholic is available at all times. The regular semi-monthly open meetings increase in size by the month. The group attempts to arrange speakers to apply to every age group present.

Local newspapers cover the open meetings; their articles are entirely factual yet maintain complete anonymity for the speakers.

has gotten away from things of importance—the family has drifted apart. Love, affection, and respect have flown out of the window, and reasoning and understanding are things of the past.

We read and study any educational matter on alcoholism with topics of interest being assigned to certain speakers. We look upon our efforts as clinical education and take seriously our participation in the auxiliary. We close our meetings with *The Lord's Prayer*, which is followed by a half hour of informality and refreshments.—*The Wives*

Many Enter A.A. Un-sponsored

From *New York, N. Y.*

In these days of rapid growth and broader public enlightenment, a fair proportion of newcomers enter Alcoholics Anonymous un-sponsored. This is especially true of the large cities, where a member is often lucky to know the man sitting next to him, let alone some suffering cave-dweller two miles and 900,000 people away.

And, of course, a sponsor is not necessary. A man is as much and as good a member of A.A. who weaves his lonely way into his first meeting, admitting only that he has an alcoholic problem, as his neighbor who is endorsed and shepherded by three group chairmen and the man who passes the plate.

Still and all, there is much to be said for the sponsorship system. It's friendly, for one thing, and unselfish. It strengthens the ideal of brotherhood within A.A. Moreover, it's just plain common courtesy.

How many prospects do you know, who got to the door of their first meeting and then turned away, terrified to face so many strangers?

How many newcomers rush from their first meeting to a bar, because they are confused and nervous and, in spite of what has been said from the platform, friendless?

How many questions are left unanswered by even the best meeting?

Among the many true things that Bill has said, perhaps the truest is that the most important guy at any meeting is the guy who is just coming in the door for the first time. He should not be alone.

It makes little difference if the sponsor and newcomer are not acquainted, if they come from different walks of life, if they have little besides alcohol in common, or even if their contact does not ripen into companionship. The sponsor has his sobriety to offer, while the newcomer offers the opportunity of a 12th Step job. The score is even.—*J.W.*



The population of the world, we are fast discovering, is composed of two types of people — those who do not like contests, and A.A.s. Our mail these spring days is burgeoning with new contest ideas, and the postman is getting measured for a pair of Adler Elevator shoes just in case he doesn't spring back to normal height when the weight of the mailbag drops to par.



A member from Vista, Calif., leads the race, at least from a quantitative standpoint. He recommends contests on: 1. the funniest joke, 2. ideas on building a clubhouse without running into debt, and 3. the most trouble with the A.A. Program.

Clarksburg, W. Va. would like to know the most outlandish or spectacular stunt ever pulled by an alcoholic to get sympathy. From Jackson, Miss, comes the suggestion to run a poetry contest, while a Buffalo, N. Y. correspondent proposes the question: "How did you manage to raise the money for that last drink you needed so badly?"

Two more potential prizewinners come in just on deadline. What was the most interesting incident you experienced on a 12th Step call? How about a prize for the best cartoon submitted?

And so it goes. The contest is closing with this issue and the prizes — two subscriptions to *The A. A. Grapevine* — are lying snug in the vault. So put your ideas on paper today.

* * *

The dry state of Mississippi, through the secretary of the Greenwood Group, proudly reports the enrollment of one of the district's leading bootleggers. "Believe it or not," the letter ends, "he's since disposed of the whiskey business, gotten a legitimate job and is doing fine. So far, he hasn't missed a meeting."

* * *

The wife of a Salem, Va., member writes us very touchingly about the reformation of her spouse. "After John had been sober several months," she claims, "things were beginning to look better all around and there was a cheerful air of congeniality about the home. One evening, in the midst of a pleasant conversation, he turned to me and said, 'Honey, you've changed so much!'"

A similar story is currently being told by one of the most popular speakers from Brooklyn, U.S.A. It seems that he stayed sober for three

months, without being convinced that he was an alcoholic, because the Program was doing his wife so much good.

These little histories might be cited as evidence of a lack of objectivity. On the other hand, they might be taken as proof that the wondrous 12 Steps exert their influence even on that screwy and inexplicable non-alcoholic thinking.

Stew, according to his friends in Cliford, Ont., was a man of dignity and purpose even while under the influence. One night he managed to get his body and a small part of his mind home, battled his way into his pajamas, and then for many long minutes stood motionless and glassy-eyed in the center of the room.

"Well," demanded his wife, "why don't you get into bed?"

"I will," Stew replied, "just as soon as it comes around again."

* * *

Back in the days when we were the higher power and had all the frustration tolerance of an old garter belt, it just didn't seem reasonable for people to enjoy a cocktail or two and then amble off to dinner, like as not leaving a half-inch of Martinis in the bottoms of their glasses. Being far-sighted, we cultivated the habit of helpfulness and usually managed to find ourself busy emptying ash trays or counting the piano keys when the rest of the party marched into the dining room. Then a quick garbage disposal job on the partly-filled glasses.

Of course this was done so cleverly that positively no one ever grew suspicious. That was one thing we knew beyond all doubt.

Vacation Hint Via The A. A. Grapevine

Probably 99.9 per cent of the members of Alcoholics Anonymous have never heard of Summerside, Province Prince Edward Island, Canada. Though hard to find on the map, it has three distinctions: It is the smallest of Canadian provinces; it has a form of prohibition; potatoes are its main product. Everyone knows what can be made from potatoes. It can also be made from sugar, malt, hops, rye and corn. Under the prohibition law one must first visit a doctor for a prescription, then obtain a permit for one purchase per week from the government liquor store. The prospects for A.A. growth here are excellent. The town of Summerside has a population of 3,000. There are approximately 50 bootleggers doing a thriving business. The A.A. group was organized 18 months ago. There are not as many members as bootleggers, yet. Summerside is a fine place for a summer vacation, for goods A.A.s who maybe want to help find more A.A.s.

One balmy evening we were doing a thorough scavenging job at the home of old and trusted friends. Luck smiled upon her favorite child: some witless guest had forgotten her drink entirely, and it stood, brim-full and challenging, on the edge of the piano.

Yep, you guessed it—castor oil.

* * *

A member of the Greenwich Village, N. Y., Group wins our vote for having devised and carried out the most ingenious method of defrauding a liquor store. This man, during the course of a two-week binge in Washington, had fallen into the habit of buying his morning pint in the liquor store next to his hotel. He always asked for the same brand, a popular one which comes in dark brown bottles.

The morning came, at last, when our friend found himself without money and without whiskey. He was desperate. Vainly he scrambled through the pile of brown bottles on the floor of his closet, hoping to find a forgotten drink—even a thimbleful. It was hopeless. But then, in his darkest hour, he noticed that the empty bottle he held in his hand had an almost perfect seal. Quickly he took it and filled it with tap water. He pressed the seal tenderly against the glass. There was a gleam of pure inspiration in his eye.

He struggled into his overcoat. The bottle upon which all his hopes were riding went into his left hand coat pocket. He made his way under forced draft to the liquor store.

"Hello," the proprietor said, recognizing him. "Same thing?"

"Yes. Don't bother to wrap it."

Our friend seized the bottle from the proprietor and rammed it into his right hand coat pocket. "I'll be in and pay you later," he began.

"No you don't," said the man. "It's against the law. Here—give that bottle back."

"All right," the genius replied. He took the bottle of water from his left hand pocket and slammed it on the counter. "But you'll never see me again," he said truthfully, rushing from the store.

* * *

Certainly the best and most pertinent malaprop of the year was heard at a recent meeting of the Bayside, L. I., Group. The speaker, an extremely nervous and sincere young man making his maiden speech, managed to cover the story of his downfall and finally spoke of that period where he realized that liquor was ruining his judgment.

"Yes sir," he said, transposing unconsciously, "one little *think* certainly changes your *drinking*."



— — or no bottom at all — — A Fable

From Old Greenwich, Conn.

Once upon a time there was a rabbit named Ronald. He was allergic to carrots. He could eat lettuce, artichokes, asparagus tips and other choice selections from the garden—but not carrots.

Somehow or other this weakness only made his appetite for carrots worse—and with the most disastrous results! Often after a feast of these vegetables he could not synchronize his ear wiggles. His nose became purple and twitchy. His tail bobbed sideways instead of up and down. He was most unhappy.

One day he met another rabbit named Pete. It didn't take any paw-twisting for Pete to tell Ronald that he, too, was allergic to carrots. But thanks to an organization called B.B. he was now free of his obsession.

"That's wonderful," said Ronald, "tell me more. What does B.B. stand for?"

"Bunnies Bombastic," replied Pete. "We meet once a week and listen to a team of bunnies from another group. They tell us the story of their carrot-eating careers, emphasizing the funny aspects and summing up with a little bragging about their humility.

Hopping Teams

"We select teams of speakers and a leader who hop over to other B.B. groups and put on similar performances each week. The ritual also calls for a secretary who announces coming attractions (after the third speaker).

"We also have a Stereotyping Committee which is in charge of promotion and publicity. Whenever we have a special attraction the committee has handbills printed, announcing the full names of the anonymous speakers."

"Well," remarked Ronald, "that sounds interesting, but I fail to see what it has to do with abstaining from carrots."

"It's very simple," continued Pete, as he pulled up a bean sprout, "one gets so tangled up with politics and promotion he hasn't time to think about carrots. This is an improvement over the old way of doing things in B.B. In the old days they called themselves the Bunnies Brotherhood and actually operated without a ritual. Very primitive methods, you know—spiritual principles and that sort of stuff."

"What is 'spiritual'?" asked Ronald, lifting an ear.

"I'm not sure," replied Pete, "but I believe it's something you can't eat. We serve lettuce and beet tops after the meetings instead. A great improvement."

"You mean," asked Ronald, "that eating beet tops and lettuce cures one of the curse of carrotism?"

"Not entirely," corrected Pete, "the main thing is getting organized. B.B. no longer carries on by the tedious process of one bunny helping another. We expect to become the fastest multiplying rabbit organization in the world. Everything must be planned to the most minute detail. This is taken care of by the committees, especially the Stereotyping Committee. This is the 'Higher Power,' which you have probably heard us mention. Then we have the Two Hops. This is the streamlined version of the now obsolete 12 Steps."

Two Hops Enough

"Sounds great," Ronald interrupted, "why take 12 steps if you can do it in two hops?"

"The First Hop," resumed Pete, "is to admit you are powerless over carrots. The Second Hop reads, 'Having become an expert on carrotism and psychiatry through our training in B.B. and

having received the Certificate and Halo from the Anniversary Cake Committee, we can now carry this message to others."

"This is done by becoming a member of the B.B. travelling circuit and by making speeches before civic organizations. Would you like to have me sponsor you, Ronald? Are you ready to admit you are powerless over carrots?"

"How does this sponsoring deal work?" Ronald asked.

"With a bang," said Pete. "Come over here. Now back up. This little ceremony will show you how we have improved the ancient slogan, 'Easy Does It.'"

So saying, Pete poured a bottle of turpentine on Ronald's tail and as the new convert took off on a wild zigzag flight over the meadows his sponsor moralized:

"We may not know where we are going, but it sure won't take us long to get there!"—A. Sop



DON'T BE AFRAID, JUST HOLD TIGHT —AND HE DID

From Mt. Vernon, N. Y.

If you look back over the Sunday supplement which carries Jiggs, to an issue that appeared a couple of months ago, cast an eye into the upper right-hand corner of the first sheet, and read the text in the topmost right-hand balloon, you will find an excellent A.A. slogan. I would like to tell my fellow *Grapevine* enthusiasts how it first came to my attention. I know that such experiences as mine are common in A.A., but they are always, it seems to me, worth reporting.

I was going through one of those awful periods of indecision that alcoholics know so well. To avoid boring you with the details of my particular hard-luck story, I will simply say that my affairs had gone pretty thoroughly to pot, in all departments. Nothing I turned my hand to would click. Every effort I made in any direction seemed to grind to a frustrating, humiliating, enervating, exhausting, sickening, inexorable stop.

Finally I decided to try to be as objective as possible about my situation, to analyze it ruthlessly and consider what might be done. In this I had some success. I narrowed down the alternatives to two feasible courses of action. All I had to do now was choose between them, throw on the coal, and get rolling again. *But I could not choose between them.*

To anyone but an alcoholic, or someone who

has actually lived through such an experience, it sounds absurd. Those who have been up against it understand. For a solid week I stared out my window by day and beat my pillow by night, trying to decide. But I could not. It was a perfectly simple design, mind you. Nothing fateful, or irrevocable, or even particularly important in the long run. It was a simple matter of deciding which of two sensible ways of investing my next two weeks' time would be preferable. But I could not make the decision.

Finally, thick-skulled soul that I am, I admitted it. It seemed incredible that a mature man, presumably in his right mind, was incapable of making a simple choice. But it was true.

After this admission I felt a mild sense of defeat and hopelessness, but this was drowned out by an overwhelming sense of relief. I could not make the decision, true. But I knew Somebody who could, the same Somebody who had helped me make my decision about drinking. Why not just turn it over? Well, why not? I did.

I reached this state of mind on Sunday around noon, after a solid week of desperate stewing. Shortly after that I began to act more or less automatically. I knew what I was doing well enough, but I had no particular plan of action, beyond a vague thought of going down to the

business section of the suburb where I live and getting something to eat.

While crossing a street I had a powerful feeling that I was to be on the alert. Just be on the alert, that's all. Be ready for some sign, which might come from any direction. An instant later my eye fell on the decalcomania sign pasted on the door of a small stationery shop on the other side of the street.

It read, "Visit Our Fountain."

In any other circumstances I would, of course, have ignored it. I didn't want anything at the fountain, and even if I had craved the kind of refreshment the place offered, I would have gone somewhere else, where the surroundings were more pleasant.

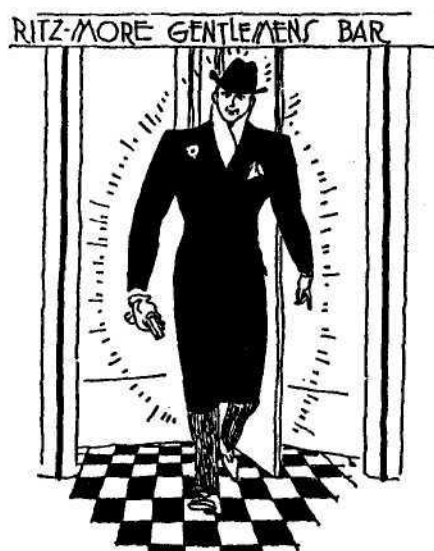
At the time, though, the sign had the force of an order. I went into the place, feeling embarrassed and a little foolish, as one usually does on going into a small shop with no intention of buying anything.

The fountain was toward the back of the store. I went there. Stacked up against the fountain was a pile of Sunday newspapers, folded with the comic section on top. My eye went directly to the top, right-hand balloon. I noticed in a vague way that the strip was Jiggs, and that something was going on about a sleigh-ride. But the message of the text absorbed me so completely that other details were hardly noticed.

It read:

"Don't be afraid. You're with Papa. Just hold tight."

Reading it was followed by an indescribable sense of peace, which lasted for more than an hour. The experience has, I believe, worked a small *but permanent* change in my outlook on life. Needless to say, the decision I could not make was, the next morning, made for me, crystal clear.—J.E.



The Alcoholic Approaches Middle Age

To grow older serenely and happily is a great achievement for even the most balanced person. For us alcoholics it is a triumph. A part of everyone's personality, in varying degrees, revolts against growing up at all, and the much thicker problem of accepting middle age is one of the knottiest a human being has to solve. When it is complicated by homesickness for the alcoholic Never-never Land it presents dangers that could easily become compulsions. Everybody has his own angles to the problem. Here are some of mine:

The Romantic Angle. My drinking, when I was young, was, on the whole, delightful. Sometimes I was made ill, often I made a fool of myself, a few times I committed serious breaches of decorum. But I was no worse than the general run of young people who frolic on Saturday night and then meet again on Sunday morning to compare hangovers and ask nervously if they have done anything awful.

In general, drinking was the concomitant of soft lights, laughter, music, dancing, and all the release and shelter and coziness at the end of the week when the sun goes down.

The non-alcoholic knows, with resignation or dismay as the case may be, that after a certain period of years one does not dance gracefully or shed responsibilities at dusk, or, in short, grow young again. He accepts the evidence of scales and mirrors and saves up to get his daughters married. But that willful child who lives in every alcoholic's heart, not a nice child but the Imp of the Perverse, still believes in a half-whisper that a few drinks are the golden key to open the past again. A few drinks will bring back the whole world that went with them when one was young. Without them, social gatherings are dull and fly-specked with reality. Even the alcoholic who has not had a drink for years has a

sneaking suspicion that some of the past—perhaps his once famous wit—would come back if he had a few drinks, or even one. He decides not to take the drink because the price is too high, but even so, he is a little sad with the thought that he is missing something.

The necessity of facing middle age is only one of many general human problems which the alcoholic is apt to think of as his own and particular misfortune.

The Regretful Angle. The longer we have experienced the joys of a non-drinking life, the more poignantly do we realize the magnitude of riches lost during our drinking days. Memory may not fill in the gaps from the past, but our restored sense of proportion is more and more deeply shocked by the knowledge of how much we have missed in our career and our human relationships. If, as is often true, the career and relationships have been wholly destroyed, then the realization becomes, in certain moods, almost insupportable. These moods are an abyss of loneliness and humiliation, and such softer sentiments are too easily transformed into impulses to assert ourselves and into resentment once more (for the hundredth time!). From there the steps to the bar or the liquor closet are few.

What we must remember is, that again we are merely facing, in intenser form, problems that are common to the whole human race. Many non-alcoholics have damaged or ruined their careers by the same traits which sent us to the bottle. Many successful people go on to the end, secure and smiling to the world, but underneath more bored and dissatisfied than we. Read E. A. Robinson's *Richard Corey*, wherein the most glitteringly successful man in town inexplicably puts a bullet through his head. The alcoholic is not the only misfit, but he has the good luck to know exactly what his poison is. "I wish I were

simply an alcoholic!" a woman whose neurosis defied analysis once said to me. Here is the gist of the matter: Would you, now that you have stopped drinking, change places with any successful person of your acquaintance? I doubt it.

The damage to human relationships is more serious. It is a frightful shock to our ego to be given the gate by relatives or friends. We want to fight back with explanations of what nice persons we have become. Then we are sorry for our friends because they are missing the company of such nice persons. "If they could only see us now," we say. "Here we are, working in the garden, or sitting sedately at our desk doing a good job, or (in a dignified way) being the life of the party, and they don't know anything about it!" We seem to think that sobriety is an unusual and spectacular virtue to be commended at every turn. And we feel angry and insulted not to be recognized as desirable companions again.

The fact is, that if our former intimates are going their own ways without showing any desire to renew the old bonds, that is their business. If we love them, it is best to dismiss them from our thoughts with a valedictory wish for their happiness. But if they are hateful (and I think that the non-alcoholics are, perhaps ignorantly, just as much at fault as the alcoholics, though this may be A.A. heresy) it is no function of ours to get back at them. We could only injure ourselves. Let the past bury the past. At night especially, resentment may go round and round and all our best efforts will not turn it off. Still, we must not telephone. We must not write that letter. We must not take that sudden and desperate drink. As one wise alcoholic has said, by cultivating humility we avoid humiliation. And the morrow will bring new interests.—X.L.



A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Better Than Commuting—Two dejected inmates of La Tuna Federal Prison, just outside of El Paso, Texas, whose constant bouts with the jug had finally landed them shaking behind bars, one day discussed A.A., something vague and intangible to them, but yet a possible ray of light in what had become total darkness. Calling upon a member of the prison parole board, the pair asked if it were possible to contact A.A. and perhaps find a solution to their problem. "I've tried everything," admitted one, "and anything would be better than commuting between the prison cell and the bars." Moved by the earnestness and sincerity of the two men, and gratified that there were men in the prison who sought to improve their lives, the board member immediately dispatched word to the El Paso Group. Here was a real opportunity for 12th Step work, and the group rose to the occasion. With the full blessing of the warden, parole board and prison chaplain, the new La Tuna Group was launched with 26 prisoners attending, and eight members of the El Paso Group sitting in as organizers and general informants. A second meeting held a week later brought one additional member into the fold, and today the La Tuna Group is well on its way to becoming an effective and determined organization. It is the second major piece of 12th Step work done by the El Paso Group, which numbers approximately 60 members, and which has been in existence for two and one-half years. A Spanish-speaking group was started a short time ago among members of that race who found it difficult to discuss their problems and capture the spirit of A.A. with English-speaking A.A. members.

All the Ships at Sea—The Seven Seas Club has been recently opened in San Francisco, Calif. Primarily for the benefit of the sailors and men around the Embarcadero it is open to all who wish to do something about their drinking problem. One of the club's major activities is keeping a steady flow of literature on alcoholism going to all the ships at sea. The new club numbers approximately 50 in permanent membership but has an additional 200 who drop in while in port. It also serves about 50 luncheons everyday.

Lest They Forget—Just to remind members of meeting night the Bloomington, Ill. Group sends a penny postcard reading "A Date Tuesday Night." The first large "A" is above the printed line and another "A" with a question mark after it is placed below, thus forming the initials A.A.

Birthday Meeting—Celebrating its second anniversary, the Atlantic City Group will hold a meeting on May 22, to acquaint the public with the A.A. Program. Dr. C. Nelson Davis of St. Luke's Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa., and A.A. members will speak.

Growing Up—After nine months of steady growth, the Philadelphia, Miss., Group has moved into a large and modern club room. The room is equipped with chrome furniture, an electric coffee urn and game tables. Besides the regular weekly meeting a study group for beginners is held each Monday evening.



SEALED ORDERS

Several months ago the Morehouse Parish Group, Bastrop, La, began a practice which to date is quite successful. Realizing that alcoholics, when drinking, are incapable of sane reasoning, the majority of the group gave explicit instructions as to what action, if any, should be taken by the group or an individual member if they should start drinking again.

These instructions were placed in a sealed envelope and filed with the secretary. This action was completely voluntary and no pressure was applied to influence anyone who did not wish to comply. The securing of a declaration from sober members eliminated the worry and doubt as to what steps to take if and when a slip occurred. The "slippee" also benefited by having his sanity restored at the earliest possible moment.

Fourteen members submitted these instructions. Only one has had to be acted on, and his drinking lasted only one day. Nine members did not participate. They have all since become inactive in A.A. or continued to drink as before.

The Morehouse Parish Group would be interested in hearing from any other group which might have adopted this practice and comparing results. Being also of an open mind, the group would like to hear any criticism of its plan.

Judge Lauds A.A. Warm commendation of the work of the Richmond Group is given by Judge J. Hoge Ricks of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, Richmond, Va. In his annual report he stated: "The court has tried for years to find an answer to the liquor problem. To this end it has used probation, good behavior bonds, treatment in the various state and local hospitals, suspended sentences, confinement in the city jail and state farm, all with little success. The one ray of hope in this dark picture is seen in the splendid activity and fine cooperation of Alcoholics Anonymous, a group of citizens who have found an effective method of dealing with this problem. About two years ago, the court began referring cases to this organization. When the person referred followed our advice and contacted the organization, he was invariably helped. However, we discovered that many of those referred did not go to the A.A. meetings. In recent months members of the A.A. group have been attending court three days a week when domestic relations cases are heard. They are ready to give information concerning the A.A. and its activities to any man or woman who indicates a desire to stop drinking, and they extend a cordial invitation to such persons to participate. Many individuals who have been before this court time and again for drunkenness in past years are now keeping sober and have been rehabilitated in their homes."

New Meeting Places—What is to be known as the Alcoholics Anonymous Assembly was formed recently in Jacksonville, Fla. The Assembly is located in new quarters where any member of A.A. or anyone desiring help is welcome. From Winona, Minn., comes the report that the Pioneer Group is moving into new clubrooms. The permanent rooms are located in a downtown building and are now in the process of redecoration.

Mississippians Meet—The first annual Mississippi A.A. Conclave was held at Allison Wells, Miss, on May 8 and 9. Founders of the first A.A. Group in Mississippi were invited as guest speakers.

A New Baby—The first meeting of the Morrisville, Vt., Group was held late in March with an original member of the New York Group as guest speaker. Other speakers were A.A. members from Montpelier and St. Johnsbury.

How Stuffy Can We Get?

From New York, N. Y.

Are some of us losing our tolerance? Are we inclined to be critical of our fellows? Do we feel superior to new members who are having trouble with the Program? Above all, are we getting stuffy?

We think these questions are important. And if we answer them "Yes," we may be heading for trouble, no kidding. If some of us don't straighten up and fly right, we're gonna be drunk. Maybe some of us need a refresher course and a kick in the pants!

These sentiments came to us the other day. An A.A. visitor called and told us of a case of rather "unsympathetic" handling by an older member in his group. Here's what happened:

A new member—a lawyer of retiring nature—joined the group about four months ago. He had been suffering from alcoholism for 15 years. He was a steady drinker. He couldn't remember a day in six years when he hadn't had a drink. Although he knew of A.A., he was too shy to approach the group and too timid to discuss the problem with his friends.

After a particularly serious binge, he wandered into an A.A. meeting, and took a seat in the rear of the room. After the meeting, he sneaked¹ out and took a few drinks to fortify himself for some deep thinking.

Having decided to join A.A., he began to attend meetings. For two months he managed to go without drinking in spite of the fact that his shyness hindered him in making friends and entering group activities. He slipped.

My visitor had made a slight acquaintance with this man and, learning of the slip, went around to see him. He suggested another reading of the book and regular attendance at the beginners' meeting. The new man agreed. He also agreed to make an extra effort to participate in group activities. After two months, he slipped again. He was kicked out of his house by the wife.

According to our visitor, an older member of the group decided to do something about this new member. Although he had never talked with the new man or been friendly with him, he took over.

The older member, an A.A. who had been dry six years, went immediately to the man's house and talked with the wife. He agreed with her that she should make him "suffer it out," "go his own way for a month or two," "be hard as hell on him." he then delivered a lecture on the evils of drink, the road to ruin and the way of all flesh. He did not bother to contact the slippee.

Several days later the drunk telephoned his wife and asked meekly to come home. The wife, feeling completely justified, refused. The drunk then telephoned our visitor who agreed to drop around to talk with the wife.

On his arrival, he was met by the older member who not only refused to let him talk to the wife but bawled him out for being so lenient with a "damned slipper." Eventually both went out in search of the lawyer. They found him in a gin mill.

The lawyer was plastered and feeling sorry for himself. After looking over the situation, the older member gave another lecture on the evils of drink and began to lay the lawyer out on general principles. "You're just a hopeless bum, anyway," he said.

Our visitor reports that he was plenty disgusted with the older member by this time and urged him to lay off. The lawyer got drunker and finally passed out. He awakened in jail.

We promised our visitor that we would do what we could. We agreed that this case was poorly handled and that there probably was something that we could try. We agreed that we shouldn't give up on the man.

When our visitor left we got to thinking. Surely, this older member wasn't typical. He was just the stinker who can be found in almost every group. We also got to wondering if there were many A.A.s who were as intolerant as this fellow. We think not but we still wonder. We can name several borderline cases in our own group. Last week two older members were reported drunk. Did intolerance have anything to do with it?

The story of this newcomer and this older member is extreme. It probably doesn't happen often. But does it happen more often than we think? Does it happen too often?

We have been dry almost four years and we honestly don't believe that we are as tolerant as we should be. Or as grateful to A.A. We can remember several guys that we gave up on recently. We are getting worried. Has anybody got a real tough 12th Step case?—*W.T.*

New Groups Announced

The following new groups reported organization to the General Service Office during the month of March:

ALABAMA—Troy.

ARIZONA—Superior.

CALIFORNIA—Los Angeles, Camaux Group, Latin American Group; San Carlos; San Pablo.

FLORIDA—Fort Pierce; Quincy; Vero Beach.

IDAHO—Rigby.

ILLINOIS—Robinson.

MAINE—Caribou; Presque Isle.

MARYLAND—Frederick.

MASSACHUSETTS—Brighton, Allston-Brighton Group; Boston, South Boston Group.

MICHIGAN—Hillsdale.

MINNESOTA—Colfraine, Itasco Group; Red Wing.

MONTANA—Livingston.

NEBRASKA—Nebraska City,

NEW JERSEY—East Orange.

NEW YORK—New York City, Abyssinian Negro Group.

OHIO—Cleveland, Garfield Heights Group.

OKLAHOMA—Tulsa, Pioneer Group.

OREGON—Medford.

PENNSYLVANIA—Doylestown.

SOUTH CAROLINA—Beaufort.

TEXAS—Innis.

VIRGINIA—Culpepper, Orange.

WEST VIRGINIA—Follansbie, Kingwood.

WISCONSIN—Stanley.

CANADA—Manitoba, St. Boniface; Ontario, Sudberg, Port Arthur.

KOREA

Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home or Abroad

Advice to the Newcomer

From Columbus, Ga.

Some newcomers to Alcoholics Anonymous seem to experience difficulty in grasping the spiritual aspects of the program. I'm glad that this wasn't too hard for me. I had tried virtually every human agency seeking relief from alcoholism, and nothing helped. I was desperate enough to grasp at anything that promised aid.

I admit that I had some misgivings at first, but as the days of sobriety became weeks, and the weeks months, I became more and more convinced that He was keeping me sober—something that I had been utterly unable to do for myself.

The longer I remained sober, the clearer I came to see other evidence of His handiwork about me. The scientists are constantly learning new secrets of the universe. Nearly every day they uncover marvels that tell us of a superior engineering intelligence. Too many of their discoveries can be worked out with mathematical certainty for our world to have just happened—it was created by some Power of infinite wisdom. With all of science's remarkable discoveries, life and growth remain veiled in mystery.

Our Creator endowed us with the power of reason, the ability to visualize things unseen. This bestowed intelligence allows us to observe the wonders of nature, and to arrive at some conclusions about the unwavering natural laws.

One of the most thought provoking object lessons comes from *The Sermon on the Mount*—"Consider the lilies of the field how they grow." I don't think that this was merely an appeal to consider nature. We are not to consider their beauty alone, but how they grew—how without anxiety or care, the flower woke into loveliness; how without any effort it slowly came ready-made from nature's loom. Shaped into beauty by secret and invisible hands, the flower develops we know not how. We do not wonder at it—it is Nature; it is God.

The same is true of our own physical growth. When we come into this life, we are very small. We gradually grow in size without effort on our part. One or two simple conditions are fulfilled, and growth goes on. Try as we may, we can't accelerate our growth. It can be retarded by certain things, just as the growth of the lily can be retarded when shut away from sunlight.

Isn't this indicative that our spiritual lives are retarded when overshadowed by self, just as is the lily when denied sunlight? Doesn't it follow that our spiritual stature will increase when this retarding shadow is removed?—*F.G.*

Letters to this department are invited on any subject pertinent to A.A. Due to space limitations you are asked to hold your letters to a maximum of 350 words.

Only initials will be published unless the writer authorizes use of his first name as identification for A.A. friends.

The *A.A. Grapevine* will not divulge the full name of any writer but will forward A.A. communications addressed to the writers of letters published here.—The Editors

Where Would I Be?

From Philadelphia, Miss.

If it weren't for A.A., where would I be today?

This is a question that I frequently ask myself because I find it to be a stimulating, beneficial tonic to my continued sobriety.

If it weren't for A.A., I very definitely would not be writing these lines on this beautiful spring day.

After battling the bottle for more than 20 years, I had come to the conclusion that the only place I could find sobriety was in the dictionary. But now, thanks to an Almighty God and the A.A. Program, I have enjoyed a sober life for 11 months.

The program has clicked with me because I wanted it to click. In other words, I had a sincere desire to live a sober, happy life. I came onto the A.A. program with an open mind, determined to give it a fair trial; although I, and others, considered myself hopelessly enmeshed in the clutches of King Alcohol.

There are three reasons for my remaining sober: (1) Attending the meetings regularly; (2) Reading A.A. literature regularly; (3) Asking God every morning to keep me sober for today; applying the 24-hour plan regularly.—*Fred McE.*

Another Youngster

From Shawnee, Okla.

I claimed to be the youngest member of A.A. in the United States until I read J.A.L.'s story in the March issue of *The A.A. Grapevine*.

Believe it or not, I started drinking at the age

**Have YOU
told a
FRIEND
about
The A.A.
Grapevine?**



of six. I am 21 now and have been in A.A. for about a year, although I regret to say that I had a slip after my first three months. I believe that I was an alcoholic from birth because I liked the first drink I ever took. I have been in several hospitals for alcoholism and by the time I was 17 I was drunk more than I was sober. I am now thankful that I have a personal relationship with God and the desire to drink has left. It is indeed a miracle. I am giving my life to the preaching of the Gospel. I am now a student at Oklahoma Baptist Seminary.—*B.C.E.*

Membership Dues

From Chicago, Ill.

We all know that A.A. membership requires no payment of money dues.

However, sound thinking should tell every member that membership in a movement which means more to him than anything else in the world is not scot-free and his standing as a member does not continue automatically and without some payment, on his part.

If you do not pay your dues in a club, lodge, association or fraternity, you are no longer a member and you know it. Why should membership in a movement, greater than the combined membership in every other club in the world, be assumed, if the member pays no dues?

Membership in every other organization requires that the member live up to the objectives of the organization and requires that he observe and respect many rules and by-laws. Any disregard for these objectives and by-laws means loss of membership. Why should *continued* membership in A.A. be assumed the inalienable and irrevocable right of every person who joins?

Should not each and every member pay the very small dues of some small indication that he or she is honestly trying to live up to the objective of A.A.—sobriety? Is this asking too much for continued membership?

Is a member who shows very obviously that he or she intends to remain a member of A.A., and drinks whenever he feels like drinking, paying the very small dues required? Are such people paying any respect to the Program? Are they not doing the exact opposite of what they joined for? Are they not violating each and every rule of the game, as it should be played? Are they helping themselves? Are they helping their A.A. group? Hardly.

The foregoing has absolutely no reference to beginners, for whom there is some excuse for being a member of a "dry" Program and drinking

at the same time. It refers to those who know the score.

Is there any tenable reason why a member should not be reminded to either try to attain sobriety or give up membership in A.A. until such time as he or she has an honest desire to try to work the Program?

There is no suggestion herein that anyone be barred from membership in A.A. . . . only the reasonable suggestion that every member, who knows the score, is fully expected to show *some sign* that he or she is *trying*, in return for continued membership . . . only an *honest effort* to play the game.—*J.O'C.*

Even the Best Have Slipped

From Pacific Grove, Cal.

When one of us A.A.s gets feeling we are heading into trouble, we call up some of the gang and some one will come out to try to get the fellow who is having trouble over the rough spot. A lot of us have kept sober by doing that. That's a big part of A.A., knowing we don't have to meet our trouble alone.

Now I've noticed and some of the fellows have told me that when they had their slips, they thought all hope was gone, that A.A. couldn't help them. All that is poppycock. Some of the very best A.A. fellows have slipped, not once but several times before they could get right bang on the target.

The slip is just another wallop on the button to knock into us the knowledge that booze is just plain poison to us and we might as well figure we're through with it.

Hope isn't gone as long as A.A. is still here, and you still think you want to stop drinking. You're not to be ashamed to meet the gang again—because we know. A lot of us have slipped and the rest of us have come pretty close to slips.

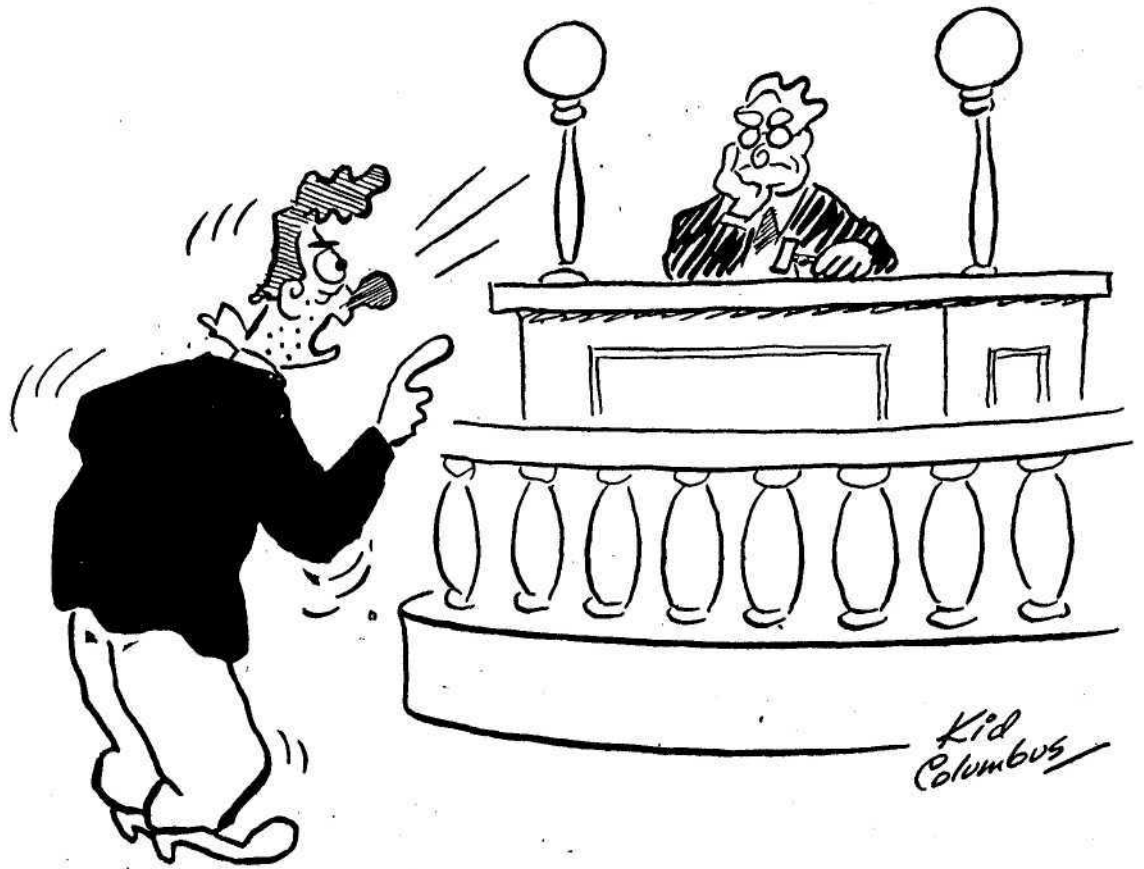
You're not guilty of anything except not calling upon every ounce of reserve and not realizing we're ready and happy to come and help when the going gets rough. You don't have to fight just by yourself. You've got a company of pretty good soldiers behind you—*H.T.*

There Is A.A. on Vacation, Too

From New York, N. Y.

I am writing this letter to emphasize how important it was to me to contact A.A. on my recent vacation. I want to remind people, too, who are going on vacation or away on business that A.A. is always there to help you. It is up to you to get the information about other groups either from your own group secretary, General Service Headquarters or the intergroup office in your city.

In 1939 I went to Bermuda and was unable to enjoy any part of the trip. I felt some doubt in my mind as to whether I should make the trip



"I demand MY rights... I'm a paid-up member of A.A.!"

again this year. Then I heard that there was a group in Bermuda and was able to contact a member here. I was on my way. I have the St. George Group to thank for a wonderful vacation.—*B.S.*

Anonymity

From Palestine, Texas

The individual who does not seem to care if the public knows he is a member of A.A. is taking on a double responsibility to A.A. and other groups around him. Suppose he slips: that reflects on all A.A.s. The effect would not be too serious—but we all should want to add to A.A. and not detract.

There has been quite a lot of personal publicity of late in various groups in Texas. This means no personal criticism. Your opinion and conscience guides you as mine does me. But we can thank the founders and writers of A.A. for a Program that has saved our lives, so we might do well to read and listen to their counsel as put forth in the official A.A. journal, which say that the first, oldest and most vital tradition of A.A. is our anonymity. It proves that A.A. practices what it preaches, and that individual members are really giving of themselves and their experiences without thought of material return or personal publicity.

No one ever has to call attention to his own ability or virtue. His good qualities speak loudly for themselves. These qualities are not devel-

oped for the purpose of being talked about. They are to serve as a blessing to others. A true blessing is not a forced activity. It is a spontaneous act that goes out from the heart.—*Dr. B.*

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Pleasures of Reading

If A Man Be Mad by Harold Maine

(Doubleday, \$3)

To say that there is a treat in store for you, when you read this book, is a strange way of putting it. I myself often shun what is called "strong reading." But I have read this book twice and I find it the most moving and thrilling of all the "alcoholic" and "psycho" books, except possibly *The Lost Week-End*.

Like *The Lost Week-End*, it launches a very unusual writing talent on the world. But whereas *The Lost Week-End* is a fragment of a sick man's



life, a thing that does not not resolve itself, *If A Man Be Mad* is a complete and true autobiography. It is the whole of Harold Maine's bitter and tragic career as "an alcoholic who becomes psychotic when drunk," a man who can't help flying off into a dream world, even when sober. It is the story of how he tries to get well, how in spite of everything, he insists on getting well, and how he finally succeeds.

Harold Maine is a pseudonym. Quite a few old timers in A.A. know the author by his real name. There was a short period of desperation when he hung around the 24th

Street Clubhouse, trying his best to get the Program, going all out on the 12 Steps and finally giving way to a wild and almost fatal pill jag. His own sick mind stood between him and A.A. Thus his observations are not altogether flattering, nor altogether sane. But here, as in the rest of the book, the writing is brilliant, often very witty.

The blurb on the bookjacket is misleading, for it refers to the author as an alcoholic, and speaks of the alcoholic problem. This is clearly a problem of alcoholism plus. The author had to find a more drastic cure than A.A. He had to invent one for himself.

The A.A. episode is just a lull in this long career of violence, both in and out of hospitals. There is the first state hospital, "on an island" (Honolulu?) where he goes to hopefully "to be cured." A kindly and well meaning judge, and his loving wife both feel that this is the perfect solution. Before he gets in the door, he sees two nurses "damn near twist a girl's arm off." He enters the hospital, and just inside the doorway, he asks a question. The answer is not verbal—it is a good beating up. Next day the attendant comes to see him in solitary. "You fell over the bed yesterday," he says instructively. "Your doctor will come, and it's better you don't talk too much."

What could a doctor have done, anyhow? Even a good doctor. As one of them explains to the author, "There are three of us here for 850 patients."

But the suffering he endures inside of himself is equal to the suffering in the institutions. During his periods at large, he is just as wretched.

And then, in "Rathburn Psychopathic," one of the best private sanitariums (many A.A.s will recognize this one) he loses his chance to stay and get real psychiatric care. The examining board does not believe that he has forgotten that he hid a bottle in the toilet tank back home. They tell him he "has reservations" about getting well.

Now he is in the custody of his second wife. There is a brief period of sanity and happiness. Then, of course, trouble starts again. The novel, which he has just submitted, is flatly rejected by the publishers. The old wounds are opened, shame and guilt return. All the bitter insecurity of a childhood with a religious fanatic stepfather, who was unloving and cruel—all this piles back on him. He says, "I cringed like an exposed embezzler."

Just as the author of *The Lost Week-End* describes the alcoholic riot act, so this author describes the wild explosion in which alcohol is just an aftermath.

This is the period where he nearly dies of drink. His chapter called "City Drunk" will startle everyone in A.A.

This is the A.A. period, also Bellevue (for which he has nothing but praise), a crackpot religious farm for men which A.A.s will recognize, and elaborate guilt-inspired DT's in his own home-town jail.

But the will to get well is still in him. He knows he is not ready for the outside world, and so decides to take a job as an attendant in a hospital.

He gets in several. A private place, for the very rich, where the treatment in the violent wards is just as bad, the system just as corrupt. He is a male nurse to a millionaire psychopath, and these chapters are Rabelaisian and extremely funny. Then comes the end, with the goal in sight. Oddly enough, this is the worst place of all. A VA hospital, that makes *The Snake Pit* look like a pale pink boudoir.

Since this book has been published—and I don't know how much the book has had to do with it—there have been newspaper exposes of our state hospital systems. There have been Congressional hearings, and VA cleanups. But some day, it is to be hoped, the voters and taxpayers (all of us) will do a real job on *all* our hospitals, mental and otherwise.

You ask yourself how this man could get well in such a place. And here, I think, is the most interesting part of the story. In this ward, where there is one attendant, to 120 violent patients, he is set upon, one day, by a prizefighter. The prizefighter knocks him out, but not until he has given him a bloody nose. Beat a patient as you will, it is not etiquette to draw blood.

Mr. Maine is dragged up before a hospital board.

"Collectively and individually they represented that group of people whose morals are certified by accepted membership in the community or institution. To have given me approval at all would have been a sign of personal weakness. They represented what my stepfather had represented in my early childhood. A feeling from way back in my childhood swept through me."

But this was the re-living of the original shock, *and the breaking point*. Suddenly a change comes over him. For the first time in his life, he feels that he is in the right. His life-long guilt leaves him. He answers the charges properly, and is exonerated. And when he resigns, and walks out of the gates of the institution, he is free and happy at last. He has started to get well.

Mr. Maine had an article in *The Saturday Evening Post* a few months ago. It describes The Winter Sanitarium, a model veteran's hospital, run by the Menningers. In this place, the patients have the best of scientific care. Also, they are made to feel wanted and loved. This is a training center for doctors, nurses and attendants, who go from here to institutions all over the country. This is a drop in the bucket, still it is hopeful. It is a beginning.—F.G., *Manhattan*.