

April 1955

The Significance of St. Louis

A. A.
Comes of Age

By Bill



COME next summer, and it will be twenty years since I first set eyes on Dr. Bob—twenty years since the spark that was to be Alcoholics Anonymous was struck and AA's Akron Group No.1 took form and substance.

This July, we are having our 1955 Anniversary at St. Louis—all of us who can get there, maybe ten thousand, maybe twenty. And all who can't be there will surely be present in spirit and will be bound to share those meaningful and stirring hours with us as they read the reports.

St. Louis isn't going to be just another anniversary for the very potent reason that there can never be, in all our history to come, another such occasion as this.

As at all anniversaries of the past, we shall thank God for our deliverance out of bondage; we shall pay grateful tribute to those near and dear who sat through the dark night of the soul with us; we shall gratefully recall those friends in the world outside whose ideas, good will, and labor without stint have done so much to make AA what it is today. We shall cry out our greetings to each other with a warmth seldom known anywhere. We shall exchange experiences, confess that our society has its faults, and ask God to show us how to remove them. We shall ponder the meaning of our short but exciting history and, in confident faith, we shall accept whatever destiny Providence has in store for us. All these things we shall do at St. Louis.

But we are also going to do some things that can never be done again: we are going to affirm that the infancy and adolescence of our society now belongs

to its near-miraculous and incredible past; that our Fellowship has now come of age; that we now propose to take full possession and full responsibility for our inheritance coming from the early years of AA—those vital legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service. No longer will the unity and functioning of our society depend upon its parents, elders or its founders. That will be the unique significance of St. Louis.

This means that all of us—AA as a whole—are now entirely ready to take over full guardianship of the AA Traditions that guarantee our unity in time to come, and also to take complete charge of those World Services which are the means by which we function as an entire Fellowship, and from which radiate our principal life-lines to those millions all over the globe who still need AA.

Maybe this sounds vague, abstract or visionary. But it really isn't. The basic idea is simple and practical. There comes a time in the life of every family when the parents must say to sons and daughters alike, "You are grown up, here is your inheritance. Do with it as you will. We will watch, we will help, but we must no longer decide for you, act for you or protect you. You are henceforth responsible for your own lives and well-being. So now take your destiny by the hand. And may God love you." Everybody knows that a good parent must do this. All parents, at some point, simply have to "let go and let God." That's exactly what we old timers will propose to you at St. Louis. At least that's what I plan to do as I believe such a decision will be healthy, timely and right.

On the great stage of the St. Louis Auditorium you will see your elected representatives, the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the midst of them you will see AA's Trustees and your World Service Staff. When the final hour of our Convention comes, I shall, on behalf of the old timers

. But shucks, here I am, spoiling the show.

Here's hoping that Lois and I will be seeing you at St. Louis!

Important Notice

All hotel room reservations in St. Louis for the Convention next July 1-2-3 must be made through: The Hotels Convention Reservation Bureau, 911 Locust Street, St. Louis 1, Missouri, on Convention application forms sent to all groups in November. If you need more application forms write to Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, New York.