



VOL. II, NO. 8, JANUARY, 1946 P. O. BOX 328, GRAND CENTRAL ANNEX, NEW YORK 17 YEARLY, \$2.50; COPY, 25c

*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.*

## *With Humility and Charity, What Greatness Is Impossible?*

*(Editor's Note: The following excerpts from a talk given, by a Wisconsin A.A. at the second anniversary dinner of the Des Moines, Iowa, Group, seem particularly meaningful and cogent as The Grapevine makes its second New Year's appearance.)*

You who two years ago were not to be trusted by man in the most trivial affairs of life, are this day trusted by God in the most important business on earth . . . trusted by Him to preserve and to pass on the mighty miracle of release from alcoholic obsession.

You who two years ago surrendered to a power greater than yourselves know now that you had returned to you a power greater than you surrendered.

You who two years ago were skulking through the back-alleys of life, picking as boon companions in your unholy misery those whose kinship you recognized by the madness in their eyes and the terror in their souls—you now stride the highroad of life, the A.A. road map to destiny in your hands.

You who two years ago were chained to the degrading slavery of drunkenness have now bound yourselves to the magnificent freedom of sobriety.

You who two years ago strutted and pranced in the devil's dance, have traded your swaggersticks of defeat for batons of victory.

You who two years ago relied upon self, know now that there is not enough horse-power in will-power to raise a man from the slinking swamps of drunkenness to the clean heights of sobriety.

### **Surrender Is Victory**

For during the past two years you have learned the great, central paradoxical truth of life—that man gains total victory over self, only through unconditional surrender to God.

Before any man can take even mere sobriety

out of our program he must read into it, those minimum qualities which he deep within the language of the soul. Some of us, alas, are content with a bare minimum of sustenance from the fabulous wealth of A.A. Others fired by their first glimpse of true riches, are alert and eager to accumulate the greatest possible wealth—not to board—but to *give away*. For the law of spiritual economy is that our wealth increases in the exact ratio of our disposal of it. It is only in the currency of God that man can spend his way to ever increasing prosperity.

### **Why Does It Work?**

Though we in A.A. may sometimes disagree on how best to take the 12 Steps of our program, I think all of us do agree on their composition.

Some of us, perhaps, do not care of what they are made so long as they support our rise to freedom. This is understandable. Also understandable is that decent curiosity of many to know wherein these 12 magical steps whose broad treads and gentle rises lifted us from death to life, wherein they differ from all other steps in this world . . . just why these steps, and these alone, of all those fashioned in time, just why they support so securely, so comfortably our own sobriety and the weight of some 23,000 other former helpless, hopeless, despairing alcoholics.

Let us bend down and examine them briefly. Surely all can see on close inspection that each massive tread is hewn from the stoutest tree of life—charity. And as we look closer we see unmistakably that the handiwork is that of the most silent of the giants of virtue—humility.

Charity and humility. Humility and charity . . . the two great virtues which very nearly comprise the total essence and well nigh the entire genius of Christianity itself. For what greatness is possible without them? And what greatness is impossible with them?

Take the 1st Step of Alcoholics Anonymous . . . "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable." A haughty man cannot set foot upon that step, and a proud man will not. Only the truly humble can crawl to it in desperation for support.

We cannot conceive of the imperious and pompous taking our 3rd Step: "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." No, only the spiritually lowly and submissive can take this high step to freedom.

And what person on earth with a vestige of supercilious vainglory could possibly take our 5th Step? For this reads, "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

### **Each A Step In Humility**

And so they go, these 12 magical steps of ours, each, as is evident and obvious, a step in humility. For without humility we cannot, I think, sustain our sobriety, and without sobriety we perish.

We bear much of humility in A.A., but seldom do we bear it defined. And without definition it must remain a vague and cloudy concept. But each of us must define humility—us all else in A.A.—for himself. In doing so surely none of us will be satisfied with less than the ideal.

If you will not think me presumptuous I give you some of my thoughts on humility, what the ideal appears to be. It is well to remember that when we kick the "L" out of any ideal, we have remaining only an idea. We may make money when we get an idea, but we shall make spiritual progress only when an ideal gets us.

To me humility is the most delicate, and certainly the most difficult, flower to cultivate in  
*(Continued on Page 6)*

# EDITORIAL: On the 3rd Step...

*"Made a decision, to turn our will and our lives over to the care, of God. as we understood Him."*

WHEN I came into A.A. four years ago, my will was very sick. I had been the confident master of my own affairs, heeding no desire but my own, yielding to no wish but my own. In the hour of disaster, I found myself alone and shaken, unable to think in consecutive steps, unable to arrive at decisions I could believe in, unable to enforce those decisions I did reach. I was so thoroughly in the grip of alcohol that my efforts to do without it worsened my nervous collapse.

I accepted the help of A.A. because I had to. But I accepted with strong reservations. I shied at the 2nd and 3rd Steps first because I didn't believe that this vague something in the universe that we call the Supreme Power had anything to do with me personally. There were other reasons. As a newspaper reporter I had had many contacts with missions dealing with drunks, and I didn't like the "Brother-have-you-been-saved" guys I used to see running missions. And my pious, non-drinking, church-going friends who had suggested that I needed to mend my ways aroused me almost to assault and battery.

So, when my sponsor mentioned the 3rd Step, I winced.

But I had to have help, and if I was unwilling to look up into the sky, I could look straight ahead. If I rejected a power higher than myself, I could accept a power other than myself. I could lean on the shoulder of another alcoholic and talk over my problems with him. I could go to meetings and make hospital calls. And when I could do none of these things, I could go off by myself and hold a mental conversation with my sponsor.

As I conducted my moral inventory and did it the way I knew my sponsor would want me to do it, I thought of all my troubles, of my waywardness, of my egotism. There was a slight shift. I was no longer talking mentally with my sponsor, but with something I had not identified. I thought of all the rules of life, the rules that people who don't get into trouble follow. I thought of the men who gave us those rules, some of them long, long ago.

Strangely, I needed little instruction. I knew what was right, and I was recognizing now that I couldn't shade the rules to suit my own pleasure. These rules guided men and women in civilized society for centuries. Great men and small had learned that in their lives something else must come first, that instead of looking within themselves they must look out. Great men and small had learned the need for self denial, the need for unselfishness, the need for doing for others. These are universal rules, and those who disregard them come to disaster eventually. I derided those rules and came to disaster; to escape disaster, I must obey.

The rules belong to the realm of what is good in life, and thus to the Good. As I look up to them, and talk mentally with myself about them and about my performance, I find myself looking to the source of the Good, talking with that source, asking to be judged according to whether I measure up to the standards.

What, then, is this? It is a power higher than my own, and it is the source of my help. It is the same power that I see at work in the group, whether individuals in the group recognize their dependence upon it or not.

I no longer worry about what the Supreme Power is. It is enough for me that my experience has taught me that the Supreme Power exists, and that it is my great help. And as long as I strive to place myself on the level on which I know this Good exists, I keep out of trouble.—Fred 5. Cleveland

## *A Tradition Born Of Our Anonymity*

By Hill

*(A continuation of the series began in the July, 1945, issue presenting basic A.A. principles for discussion).*

In the years that lie ahead the principle of anonymity will undoubtedly become a part of our vital tradition. Even today we sense its practical value. But more important still, we are beginning to feel that the word "anonymous" has for us an immense spiritual significance. Subtly but powerfully it reminds us that we are always to place principles before personalities; that we have renounced personal glorification in public; that our movement not only preaches, but actually practices a truly humble modesty. That the practice of anonymity in our public relations has already had a profound effect upon us, and upon our millions of friends in the outside world, there can hardly be doubt. Anonymity is already a cornerstone of our public relations policy.

How this idea first originated and subsequently took hold of us is an interesting bit of A.A. history. In the years before the publication of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, we had no name. Nameless, formless, our essential principles of recovery still under debate and test, we were just a group of drinkers groping our way along what we hoped would be the road to freedom. Once we became sure that our feet were set on the right track we decided upon a book in which we could tell other alcoholics the good news. As the book took form we inscribed in it the essence of our experience. It was the product of thousands of hours of discussion. It truly represented the collective voice, heart and conscience of those of us who had pioneered the first four years of A.A.

### Search for a Title

As the day of publication approached we racked our brains to find a suitable name for the volume. We must have considered at least two hundred titles. Thinking up titles and voting upon them at meetings became one of our main activities. A great welter of discussion and argument finally narrowed our choice to a single pair of names. Should we call our new book *The Way Out* or should we call it *Alcoholics Anonymous*? That was the final question. A last minute vote was taken by the Akron and New York Groups. By a narrow majority the verdict was for naming our book *The Way Out*. Just before we went to print somebody suggested there might be other books having the same title. One of our early lone members

*(Continued on Page 10)*

# DISCHARGE PERIOD OFTEN HAZARDOUS FOR A. A. VETERANS

*(The following article was written by an A.A. who was an overseas veteran of World War I, who served, among, other places, in the Army of Occupation in Germany for a period of seven months and, though not an active alcoholic then, knew the boredom of inactivity, and, later, the problems of readjustment.—Editor)*

From conversations with various A.A. members who have recently resumed the status of civilians and from fairly extensive correspondence with other A.A.s who hope soon to be on their way to separation centers for discharge from the service, it is clear to the writer that readjustment to the routine of ordinary living is going to be somewhat difficult for most alcoholics. In the March 1945 issue of *The Grapevine* this subject was discussed by an A.A. then undergoing the readjustment, but the time now appears to be ripe to bring up additional aspects of the problem.

Consider that many of our returning A.A. veterans entered the service without too much preparation of previous sobriety and that often they were then separated from group therapy and contact with any of their fellow A.A. members, and even from their families, over long periods of time. Despite these apparent handicaps, they have, for the most part, done a surprisingly good job of remaining dry.

## Service Provides Security

Now comes the time when these A.A.s have to separate themselves from the discipline of the service, which probably helped them to maintain sobriety to some extent, and return to reliance on self-discipline. In addition, they must face a different type of reality in meeting the ordinary problems of society, which have been temporarily deferred for them. True, they may have had to face very acute problems while in uniform but these were quite possibly well defined and the solution often not of their own volition. Military discipline provides a certain measure of security from making the type of decisions which are distasteful to the average alcoholic.

Then there are the major problems that confront most veterans; the bad housing situation in our cities, the question of a peacetime job perhaps at a considerable reduction below service pay and allowances, and very probably a serious family readjustment after a long absence from home. It is undoubtedly true, also, that civilians should work harder to adjust themselves to the viewpoints of all returning servicemen and should be more acutely conscious of the emotional disturbances, or worse, which these men have undergone. The veterans

may well be appalled at some examples of complete selfishness on the part of fellow citizens who seem to have forgotten already any of their responsibility for problems beyond their very limited horizons. Isolationism, indifference to human suffering, prejudice in various forms do not sit well, I think, with the returning servicemen. If, however, they are fortunate enough to be members of A.A., they should remember these things have no part in our program of recovery either. The best course for them would

---

## THREE MONTHS A MILESTONE

Three months in the group is enough to convince the newcomer that he has made a right choice.

By this time he has a fairly good knowledge of the "mechanics of sobriety," and has made considerable progress in the solution of the common problem.

Things are startling to "shape up," on all sides, tension decreases or disappears, home life becomes more attractive, even alluring, confidence returns, business relationships are better, health improves.

The sum total of all these factors is a marked and somewhat strange feeling of well being, bordering on exuberance (not necessarily youthful).

This is unquestionably the delightful and very desirable state that comes to nearly all in the group about this time.

During this period it is well to take stock of things, and above all not to become confused.

The confidence that has returned for instance, should not manifest itself in any way that spells arrogance. "Walking softly" is a fine art, not an act of subservience.

Nor is your sobriety your own exclusive attainment. Remember, all activities in A.A. are strictly a "we," not an "I" proposition, otherwise you could not have received any of the benefits which have accrued to you, for the group would have disappeared long before you found it.

It is also advisable to inform one's self that there is an element of emotional ecstasy likely to be present at this time, which will probably wear off. This should cause no concern, as there are many substitutes, depending on the individual's personality, tastes, inclinations.

Above all, strive to recognize all forms of arrogance in yourself, "walk softly," and maintain a healthy interest in the group.—*Frank L. Flushing.*

seem to be wholehearted re-entry into the activities—and there are many—of their A.A. groups. A word of warning may be helpful—a returning A.A. veteran should not postpone active participation in group activities during that dangerous period of inactivity and relaxation of a final leave or before resuming civilian employment. Procrastination is a failing of many alcoholics and too much leisure can prove fatal. The program of A.A., not without good reason, is one of action.

Conceivably, though this should not be so, the A.A. veteran may feel that he has gotten out of step with his group, perhaps that he is not receiving as cordial a welcome as he had expected. There are many new faces and members unknown to him have become prominent in A.A. activities. This feeling may be a bit of the old ego reasserting itself and true humility requires that it be promptly quelled. A.A. is growing rapidly these days and there has never been a time when the wise counsel of older members was more needed. There is plenty of work for all and the A.A. veteran has a challenge to meet in helping countless other veterans, now and in the future, who have perhaps never heard of A.A. and who do not yet recognize the nature of the alcoholic illness. Those of us who have not been in this war need the aid the veterans can bring to the group.

## Discipline, Not Will

Earlier in this article the writer mentioned return to self-discipline. Self-discipline is not a product of self-will. Possibly the real answer to why A.A.s were amazingly successful in remaining dry under the temptations to drink that occur in the service is best answered by an article written by one of them, on request, for publication in *The Grapevine* of November, 1944. I quote, in part: "The solution to which I turned in desperation was the 11th Step in the A.A. program—prayer and meditation. I knew nothing about prayer and very little about meditation, but I reckoned it was a case of start learning or else. . . . Anyway, it worked, and it kept me dry." I might add that this man, with only four months as an A.A. before going into service, has now been dry for about three and a half years, is still in the Army, active in A.A., and, I believe, content. From many other servicemen, the testimony has been identical. May it be suggested, therefore, to the A.A. veterans who have learned to turn their will over to a Higher Power under the stress of war, that in continuing to rely on the faith thus acquired lies the real answer to their problem of readjustment.—*Abbot T., Greenwich Village, N.Y.C.*

# East Coast or West Coast, A.A.s Always 'at Home'

## Traveler Finds Welcome

*(The following is the account of a country-wide trip made recently by a New York A.A. who accompanied her husband, a non-A.A., on a business visit.)*

No matter where you go A.A.s and A.A. meetings are the same. Which is highly comforting. And highly remarkable for an organization that has no rules or regulations and certainly no ceremony, customs or ritual. As far as I saw, the meetings, large or small, are the same; the first-name greeting and instant acceptance without reservation, inventory or barrier are the same; the enthusiasm and burning excitement, the intense devoted friendships and loyalties, the understanding, sympathy and tireless efforts to help—yes, and the growing pains, the snags, the feuds and fusses, the splits and discouragements and the up and downs are the same.

When you leave New York you get from the Foundation a list of the secretaries with addresses or phones, and a number of your pals arm you with names of their pals in various towns. You may write ahead to each town that you are coming and will stay so-many-days; or wait and call when you reach your hotel. In only one case was the name Alcoholics Anonymous mentioned on the phone—seldom was even A.A. mentioned. But everywhere the performance was the same. Addresses and times of meetings are given you and at least one name and phone number. And you think, "Fine, that's that." But in a very short while your phone rings and a key man is on the phone. He simply wants to welcome you and suggests he pick you up and drive you to a meeting. Or he'd like to drop around with a few other members and talk. Or have lunch and bring along one or two of the lady A.A.s. Or take you for a drive and show you the wonders of his city. Or ask you to make a 12th Step call at a hospital (that tickled me and made me proud). Or, since there happens to be no meeting during the brief stay, why not a bunch of them throw an impromptu meeting in your hotel room—or one of their homes?

The Relative who is along with you (except for A.A., of course, I was along with him) is welcomed, too—by personal phone calls and chats and by being specifically invited and included in everything but the closed meetings.

The actual procedure of meetings varies somewhat. In Detroit it was opened with a prayer that I found so very touching and fine that I asked for a copy of it. It may appeal to you:

Our Heavenly Father—we ask Thy blessing on this meeting.

Please bless the spirit and the purpose of this group.

Give us strength to follow this program according to Thy will and in all humility.

Forgive us for yesterday, and grant us, in Christ's name, courage for today and hope for tomorrow. Amen.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank B. and Mr. and Mrs. C. S. (Dick) T. took me to the Cleveland meeting held in an empty store on Lee Road that was the first and original meeting place for all Cleveland. There are now 42 Greater Cleveland Groups stemming from a Cleveland Central Committee. The meeting lasted an hour and was led by one man who talked not only of his history and his rebirth but on what he totaled up as his main lessons learned to date. . . . "Don't watch the slippers—but watch those who don't slip closely and watch them as they go through difficulties and pull through." . . . "I believe it's a great and dangerous mistake to give A.A. to anyone before the person is ready. You spoil a man's chances five years from now by jumping the gun—by giving him A.A. too soon—and then when he's really down he feels he tried A.A. and that it didn't do him any good." . . . "I no longer pray each morning to keep sober. I pray to be given the chance that day to help someone, and I give thanks each night for the opportunity to have helped someone."

At the end of his talk this leader was open to questions or observation and the discussion was meaty, occupying about half of the hour's meeting and controlled by the leader who called on those who raised their hands in turn. After this everyone went down to the basement where coffee, sandwiches and cakes were served, and I met a lot of the members, most of whom had messages to send back to New York members. We stayed about an hour, but obviously most of the crowd was settled in for at least another hour.

That practice seems to prevail pretty universally. A great many A.A.s feel that the "koffee klatch" part of a meeting is as vital as the meeting itself and in some instances more so as it is the period for intimate and detailed hashing-over of cases and personal problems. For this reason almost everywhere I went the meeting was kept to one hour and the fraternizing was the bulk of the evening. And almost everywhere the meetings started earlier, generally at 8 and often at 7 and 7:30. This gave commuters time for dinner after the office, a meeting, a long coffee-gabfest and still let them get home in time for sufficient sleep. They could—and did on occasion—do a bang-up night owl

job, but they deliberately do not make a practice of it.

In Detroit I had personal introductions (though my A.A. friend here got the itinerary mixed and I felt crushingly neglected for two days, hesitant to call and horn in). Then came the beautiful Ann K. with a high-score record of sobriety and with perhaps the finest spiritual kinship with A.A. I have met Arch T., who started A.A. in Detroit and who was one of Doc S.'s earliest babies, came to call and drove me that night with Charles (Chuck) K. and Peggy H. to a large and hard-hitting instruction meeting which lasted one hour and included a very sumptuous, wives-supplied sandwich-coffee conference afterward. We were joined by Helen K., the non-alcoholic-wife secretary for Detroit, whose husband happened to lead that night's meeting. It broke my heart to miss a very special gathering at Ann's afterward, but I was due to take off, unhaggard and beamish, early the next morning.

In Chicago I visited the office, which is superb. From one of the top floors of a skyscraper on State Street the views are breathtaking. There are two small but slick offices and an outer reception room which is practically a lounge, attractive, restful and much used. Grace C., the famed Chicago secretary, was out on sick-leave and a non-A.A. was officiating. The phone seemed to be as busy as the one in New York; a member came in and briefly used one office to write some job-seeking letters, others came on interview appointments in the lounge. I went from there to a noon-hour meeting in the Loop, some thirty men and three women with the leader briefly stating and elaborating on a Step and then calling on everyone present in rotation for one or two minutes' comment. This was in an office building; one very large room, volunteer decorated, with comfortable chairs and leather divans lined up. Coffee was being poured in the small room and almost everyone took a cup into the big meeting. These noon and early afternoon meetings are growing in favor, I was told, not only for night workers but for members whose family or home-life problems make night meetings difficult to arrange.

That night I had dinner with Dick S., Dorothy S. and Adeline A., who drove us in a beating storm to the Water Tower Group, about thirty-five strong with about nine or ten women. Again after a topic was presented, rotation discussion was called. The fire and earnestness of each person as his turn came impressed me—each knows he's expected to speak and

*(Continued on Page 8)*



**"I may be a little late, honey. Charlie's in town and wants me to have a New Year's Eve drink with him."**

## VINO VIGNETTES: *Thumbnail A. A. Biographies*

"My wife Frances was running a rooming house on West 25th Street when we first ran into A.A. back in 1940," said Tony—the 'Mr.' half of this fabulous couple who are among the best known 'man-and-wife' A.A.s in Manhattan. "Frances was cleaning up a guy's room in our house when she saw the A.A. book on his dresser and took a gander at it. Then she spoke to this character and he told her the A.A. Clubhouse—the old one—was right around the corner on 24th Street and what A.A. was all about.

"When F. told me about it and suggested we might drop in at the Clubhouse and look them over, I said; 'What the hell do we want to go there for? We don't want to mix around with a bunch of drunks!' Well, you know what a persistent female Frances is. She saw she couldn't get me there by the direct route and she wanted to go. One night when we were out for a walk she steered me past the Club and when we were right out in front she says, as though she were surprised, 'Oh, Tony, there's that A.A. Club the fellow who lives with us belongs to! Wonder what the people who go there are like? Do you suppose it'd be nice to meet some of them—you know, just to have more acquaintances around the neighborhood?'

"I wasn't interested and I told her so without using any Sunday-school language, if you know what I mean. And Frances, she came right back at me and said I was an obstinate so-in-so with a few other uncomplimentary remarks about me

and my ancestors. You see, Frances was on the wagon at the time and I was drinking a couple of bottles of beer a day.

"I might just as well have walked right in the A.A. Clubhouse that night because Frances was determined to go there and you know what a determined person she is! Well, before I knew it we were going there to meetings. Frances is pretty aggressive and I'm not, so she embarrassed hell out of me by dashing up as soon as the speakers had finished talking, slapping them on the back, shaking their hands and telling them how blankety-blank good they'd been.

"After we'd been to a few meetings a damn funny thing happened to me—I got drunk, stinking fall-down drunk. Whew—it was something! I'd been sticking close to beer for quite a while and had done pretty well. Not this time—I drank everything and anything I could get my hands on. Well, I had one helluva time getting over it. Seemed to be worse than ever since I heard all the A.A. stuff because of course by then I knew I was a gilt-edge 14 carat alcoholic.

"Frances and I had been alcoholics for a long time, and you can spell it with capital letters, too. I'm not telling tales on Frances when I say this about her because she tells it to the cockeyed world a flock of times every day. Believe you me, we had some career as active working alcoholics. We were sort of migratory

*(Continued on Page 12)*

## Don't Get Cocky!

The purpose of this little piece is to pass along to you an experience. Believe me, it is not an effort to moralize. It is not an effort to push any beat-up platitudes down your throat. It is simply something that happened to me. If you have had a similar experience, you will understand. If you haven't, my experience may help you.

About two years ago, I heard of the A.A. way of life. Several of us were sitting around the newsroom of a New York newspaper and the subject of alcoholic drinking was being kicked around. A photographer, who had been completely sober for a long time, was telling us how he did it.

It was 2:15 a.m. and I had a hangover. I was suffering through the last fifteen minutes of the shift before beating it over to Sam's for a required number of "doubles." I had been drinking steadily for two weeks and had reached the point where my drinking was for relief rather than for pleasure. In other words, the drinks I would take at 2:30 were a necessity. There would be no fun in them for me.

The photographer was saying that there was a group of alcoholics in New York who were staying sober with no trouble at all. He told us that he hadn't believed it until he went around to an A.A. meeting and saw for himself. He informed us that he had become a member of A.A., but he didn't have to remind us that he was staying sober. Don't get me wrong. This guy wasn't preaching to us. He simply stated that A.A. gave him the answer to his problem.

As a consequence of the photographer's story, I went around to the 41st Street Clubhouse meeting on the following Tuesday night. I was still extremely shaky because I was only three days away from the two-weeks binge. The meeting was interesting and, despite my jittery condition, I stayed it out. I left, after meeting a few A.A.s, with the hope of solving my drinking problem.

So far, there is nothing unusual about my story. I continued to go to A.A. meetings; offered my services as an orderly at Knickerbocker Hospital; went out on 12th Step work; and made at least three meetings a week a part of this new way of life. I stayed sober. More important, I didn't seem to miss drinking and I was finding a new happiness. Then it began to happen.

It was about five months after my introduction to A.A. that I began to get a little bored by the meetings. By then, I had heard it all. When the speakers walked to the platform, I knew what they would say. Unless someone "was amusing" or "told an especially interest-

*(Continued on Page 12)*

# With Humility and Charity, What Greatness Is Impossible?

(Continued from Page 1)

our gardens of sobriety. How much easier it is, for example, to be honest than to be humble.

As I see it, humility is the great mother virtue of A.A. For it is in the soil of humility where grows the tallest tree in life—charity. And it is that same mother soil which nourishes the roots of faith and courage, duty and honor.

Humility means a total lack of boast and bombast, of pride and conceit. The truly humble man recognizes the truth—the fact—that all that he is, has or does which is right and good, is through acting in accord with the will and grace of God. The humble man not only acknowledges this to himself but is prepared to admit it to the world.

There is in true humility no connotation of servility. To the contrary. Only the slave must be servile; only the free can be humble.

Nor does humility imply a pious air stirred by the self-conscious air of sanctity. Humility is never abject before man, though always submissive before God.

Humility is ready to compromise a policy but never a principle.

Humility is the eye of judgment turned inward upon itself, seeing clearly its own numerous faults. Thus when it looks outward, it cannot in honesty and dare not in arrogance, judge the repeated failures of others.

Humility lowers a man to his proper size without degrading him and thereby increases his stature without inflating him.

Modesty is born of knowledge; humility is conceived in wisdom.

## Our Attitudes Reflect It

Humility, as I see it, is man's relationship with God born of knowledge and admission of his complete dependence upon Him which is reflected back in all of his attitudes towards men.

Most of us find it easy enough to be humble in trial and defeat but once we become again strong and victorious we are inclined to throw off the quiet dignity of humility and don the flamboyant cloak of pride. Surely this is one of the most unlovely sights on earth—especially in A.A.

To sum it up . . . humility, I think, is the tray on which we offer to man the things we have received from God. Let us keep it clean and bright, free from the corroding stains of pride and arrogance.

And what of charity, out of which the hand of humility fashioned our 12 Steps? Again, what is the ideal towards which we should make progress?

Well, what *is* charity? One definition is—"the will to help those in need." Another is, "lib-

erality to the poor—the poor in fact and the poor in spirit." A further definition is, "readiness to overlook faults of another." And a final one is, "spiritual benevolence." These things are charity.

## No Quibbling

And they are not things we *may* do, they are things we *must* do, things we *will* do—and keep on doing regardless of human failure—if we have taken the 3rd Step of our A.A. program. For we know what the will of God is, and therein we surrendered to it, without reservation. He has not only told us His will—He has commanded us to it—"Love thy neighbor as thyself." There it is. We cannot duck or dodge it. It is not a question of what we would do in any given situation, but what Almighty God commands us to do in all situations. "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

And how do we translate this Commandment in A.A.? As in all else, each decides for himself.

Each of us freely admits that he is here only through the grace of God—through the charity of God. Each of us knows that had he been judged according to his merits, none of us would be here. Had Almighty God become outraged at the insults we hurled to the very throne of heaven, had He become righteously angry at our lies, deceits, disgrace and repeated failures; had He become out of patience with our broken promises and hollow oaths, not one of us alcoholics would be here today. Think of it! This indeed is something to ponder when considering the concept of charity. We have received forgiveness time and time again. And yet we who so long delayed atonement, found redemption in an instant. How? By merit of our own? No . . . by the charity of God.

Can we therefore, conceivably give less to our brothers than we have so undeservedly received? Can we and sensibly hope for continued charity to ourselves?

Can we serve God in humility while serving our brother in judgment? And yet do we not sometimes attempt this impossible feat? Do we not upon difficult occasion ignore the fact that charity is not a quality of the mind but a virtue of the heart?

Do we actually believe—have we learned fully—the simple lesson that man becomes wealthy only by what he gives to others, and remains poor only by retaining to himself? Do we believe this? And do we know that the greater the poverty we serve, the richer we become? Do we believe these things—believe them in our heart and soul—those seats of wisdom infinitely higher than the chair of intellect?

Or do we sometimes try to make our charity

in A.A. "practical?" If so we make mockery of Christ's words. For He said, He commanded, "Give him that asketh thee; and from him who would borrow of thee, turn not away."

Is that "practical?" It is not. But it is divine command. Do any of us, by our own admissions unworthy recipients of God's unlimited mercy and charity, dare do less than commanded?

It is not given to any of us to say what we would do in any given situation, but it is given to all of us, given clearly and unmistakably to know what we should do in all situations. "Judge not that ye be not judged" and "give to him that asketh thee." There it is. We can take it or leave it. It is as simple as that.

But what of the "phony?" we ask. What about the man who, in our exalted and infallible judgment, comes to A.A. not to recover from his obsession, but to impose upon its members? What about the man who, in our critical judgment, does not want to stop drinking . . . who uses A.A. to his own selfish ends . . . who puts the bite on wherever possible? What about him? And what about the psychotic whom "we can't help?" Should we be charitable to him? Is it common sense to do so?

## So Much to Gain

Why, oh why, are we in A.A. so afraid of being "imposed upon?" We . . . of all people on earth? How many times did we impose upon others—frequently with even less honest intentions than the man we now judge "a phony?" How the very angels of God must weep at the fantastic sight of one common drunkard, redeemed by the limitless charity of God, refusing, actually refusing another common drunkard on the grounds that he is a phony!

Could there be any more ironical spectacle on earth than this ghastly travesty on charity? We are not invited, we are commanded to give him who asketh us. To give not only money, to give of ourselves. Almighty God did not say that he who asketh us must be "worthy" in our critical judgment. He said, "Give!" True charity is no more concerned with "practicalities" than is true faith. Either each transcends all "practical" evaluation or neither is what it pretends.

Suppose—according to worldly opinion—we in A.A. are repeatedly "taken in." What of it? Suppose we do give our time, money, effort, sacrifice our comfort and convenience for one whom we do not benefit (so far as we know—and we know very little indeed of such things), for one who remains (outwardly) indifferent and ungrateful? Do we know that God considers not so much the merits of him who receives—worthily or unworthily—as of him who gives?

If it turns out that the man to whom we have

given is unworthy, do we not know that we have nevertheless given to humanity? This is the meaning of charity. For charity . . . true charity . . . is not a gift to man at all, but a payment to God. This simple but profound truth we should never forget. With most of us, payments are long overdue.

#### What Can We Lose?

What if our charity in A.A. is misplaced—misplaced, that is, so far as we can foresee? It is merely misplaced. It is not lost. Does not God give His charity to the worthy and the unworthy alike, every hour of every day?

Let us remember this when, in our tired impatience, we are tempted to turn from the man we have helped six, eight, fifteen times, apparently without result. How many times shall we help? Surely there is a limit? Yes, there is. But one none of us is likely to reach.

What a magnificent thing it would be if Alcoholics Anonymous, the most effective agency under heaven for rehabilitation of the obsessed, became rightly known as the most charitable fellowship on earth!

But sometimes in our exasperation and annoyance do we not cry out that we are not a charitable organization? But aren't we? Are we not proof of someone's charity? And if we are not, isn't it time we became a charitable organization? Charity, remember, means infinitely more than giving money, though it certainly includes it. It means giving of our self, our time, effort, energy, comfort and convenience.

Yet do we not sometimes hear that weakest and most specious of arguments—that we may do more harm than good by extending charity in certain situations? What nonsense. What an ineffectual sop to guilty conscience. Who are we to judge? "Judge not . . ."—this is the order.

Charity does not mean an abandonment of prudence, common sense or intelligence, but it most definitely does mean a recognition of our inability to know the heart and soul of another. It does mean that we are content to give of the abundance we have received from God and let Him determine the result. There can be no excess in true charity.

We in A.A. are under no fiat to understand our brother, but we are under orders to help him—and to help him as many times as God gives us that privilege. I think we in A.A. never have the right to start judging or to stop giving. To help . . . that and that alone, it seems to me is our mission in A.A. All else we leave to Him. This is both a duty and a privilege . . . an order and an honor. Do we dare reject one while accepting the other?

And let us not forget that no matter what we do in A.A., unless there be charity in our hearts, we are but animated marionettes, still indulg-

# The Pleasures of Reading

*The Glass Crutch; the Biographical Novel of William Wynne Wister*

By Jim Bishop (Doubleday, Doran & Co., \$2.50)

"The True Story of A Man Who Conquered Alcoholism and Found The Keys to Its Cure."

This book is a mixed pleasure. Very much so. The story, as written by Jim Bishop, gets off to a slow start, but soon it's going at high speed. I think that most A.A.s will read this with great interest. For me it had all the excitement of *The Lost Weekend*. Moreover, you see how this particular alcoholic got that way. Bill Wister was a spoiled rich Philadelphia boy. His mother overindulged him, overprotected him. He never grew up. His whole drinking career, complete with jails, sanitariums, weeks of semi-coma, attempted suicide, a ruined marriage, an inability to keep jobs—this is a wonderful piece of writing and wonderfully true. Mr. Wister has been honest and courageous to tell it.

The part about Peabody is swell. Peabody was a lay therapist, who had been an active drunk. Much of what he taught Bill Wister sounds like A.A. There is no mention of God or the Higher Power. There is a lot of talk about cure. The word appears not only in the blurb on the jacket, it comes up repeatedly in the book. Bill Wister got "cured" under Peabody. It took a year.

We A.A.s don't use that word. We think we have a good reason not to. But I, for one, would not say that any other method of sobering up us drunks is wrong. If it works, fine. Peabody helped a great many people. So, for a while, did Wister.

But by September, 1943, Wister had had a series of difficulties with the medical profession. No one would recognize him or let him work with them. He spent a short time in one New Jersey sanitarium, but the war closed that. In California, where he went, hoping to become associated with some hospital or sanitarium, he had a serious slip. In September he returned east and "vowed he would never practice psychotherapy again."

Now comes the epilogue, written by Wister. He is quite dogmatic about what makes an alcoholic. Alcoholics are *all* spoiled children. Or this is the impression he gives. He lays down the law about how alcoholism should be—is the word—cured? He says: "An alcoholic must of absolute necessity have the help of "a psychiatrist, an accredited psychologist or a psychotherapist." A footnote says, "These three terms are not in any way to be confused with a psychoanalyst whom I most emphatically *do not* recommend."

As a confuser of terms, Mr. Wister is not to be beat. See the footnotes on page 302. It shows Mr. Wister to be an accredited "psychotherapist in alcoholism," and both Mr. Strecker and Mr. Chambers vouch for him. But then, quick as a flash, he turns himself into a psychiatrist, too. "Hereafter the use of the name 'psychiatrist' includes in its meaning an accredited psychologist and a psychotherapist endorsed by a psychiatrist." This makes everything legal. But in the world outside Mr. Wister's book, which is, after all, most of the world, a psychiatrist is an M.D., who is able to give physical treatment such as shock therapy. Mr. Wister is no M.D. At one time he was an enthusiastic 12th Stepper in his own way. Right now, he seems to have run into a couple of conflicts. I don't think he's any farther away from a drink than most of us. The word cure may look good. But—watch it, Mr. Wister. -- Felicia G., *Manhattan*

ing in materialistic exhibitionism, still spending our way to self-satisfaction rather than feeling our way to atonement.

It is not the greatness of our works but the greatness of our motives which will be evaluated in that quiet counting-room of God where eternal values are computed.—H. A. R., *Eau Claire, Wis.* \* \*

#### The Old Masters!

A cosmopolitan movie critic, referring to the soft, implausible ending of the screen version of *The Lost Weekend*, though otherwise highly praising the film, said, "We'd all be happier, I think, if Paramount had let Alcoholics Anonymous take over at the end."

#### BRITANNICA LISTS THE GRAPEVINE

On page 370 of the Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook for 1945, appears the following:

"The year 1944 witnessed the opening of the School of Alcohol Studies under the direction of the Yale University Laboratory of Applied Psychology. The Yale plan also sponsored the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. . . . A current journal called *The Grapevine*, originating from P. O. Box 328, Grand Central Annex, New York, appeared during the year. It was dedicated to furthering the general philosophy of life and action prescribed by Alcoholics Anonymous."

## The Clip Sheet

Comments from the Public Press

"Four per cent of the nation's drinkers are chronic alcoholics," said the Associated Press in a release from Syracuse, Dec. 14. The AP was reporting an address by Prof. Selden Bacon, chairman of Connecticut's new Board for the Study, Care and Treatment of Inebriates, made before the New York State Conference on Social Welfare. Dr. Bacon was quoted as saying that 50,000,000 Americans indulged in alcoholic beverages to some extent and 2,000,000 were alcoholic."

\* \* \*

From the New York *Herald-Tribune*, Dec. 14:

"Children of alcoholic or psychotic parents, placed in foster homes at an early age, have as good a chance as children of normal parents of becoming well adjusted adults, it is indicated in a recent study published at Yale University."

The *Herald-Tribune* was reporting on a paper written by Dr. Anne Roe of Yale University and the late Dr. Barbara Burks, entitled, "Adult Adjustment of Foster Children of Alcoholic and Psychotic Parentage and the Influence of the Foster Home."

The newspaper noted that "the actual conclusions of the study are confined to 78 children placed 20 years ago in foster homes," and continued: "No child of psychotic parentage was found psychotic ... no child of alcoholic parentage was found alcoholic. . . ."

"It can be concluded," the report stated, "that such parentage does not preclude good adjustment. . . ."

\* \* \*

Ann Arbor, Mich., *Tribune*: "Women alcoholics, increasing so rapidly in the last few years, have become such a serious medical and social problem that many leading physicians and psychiatrists have joined together in a survey and study of the situation. Twenty-five years ago there was only one woman alcoholic to 25 men alcoholics. Today the ratio is one woman to six men, taking a cross country figure. A reliable check-up, made by a director of the Psychiatric Institute of the Municipal Court in Chicago, shows that in about 12 years women and men drunkards appearing before the court increased in ratio from one to five to an alarming comparison of one to two.

"Psychiatrists are of the opinion that women's nerves and brains degenerate more rapidly with constant drinking because of a more sensitive nervous system. The woman alcoholic might feel helpless and hopeless. But if she wails to follow a program that will insure sobriety she should contact Alcoholics Anonymous. . . ."

## Barley !!!CORN!!!

*(What's the funniest A.A. tale or quip you've heard? Others would like to hear it. Send it in.)*

Add surefire hangover remedies: Take one pint of gingerale and mix well with the juice of two quarts of whiskey.

\* \* \*

When God gave out brains, I thought He said trains, and I missed mine;

When He gave out looks, I thought He said books, and I didn't want any;

When He gave out noses, I thought He said roses, and I ordered a big red one;

When He gave out legs, I thought He said kegs, and I ordered two fat ones;

When He gave out chins, I thought He said gins, and I ordered a double;

When He gave out heads, I thought He said beds, and I look a nice soft one;

Boy, am I a mess!

\* \* \*

Remarked one of the boys after a bad tussle: "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like Bellevue."

\* \* \*

An oldtimer says some of the new members coming in these days are so young compared to the age level in the early days of A.A. that instead of alcoholics they should be called alcoholettes.

---

## East Coast, West Coast

*(Continued from Page 4)*

each seems to have a wallop to hurt. It was stimulating and alive and you had the feeling that plenty would be challenged and rehashed. In the coffee session that was to follow a block or so away. "I'm a bookkeeper and I take my daily inventory as a reckoning of stewardship. . . . I've been steward of health, of money, of people's affection and interest, and of talent, too. How have I spent them? What's my ledger look like? And if I've made a grave error I don't mind phoning right then and trying to rectify it somehow so that my account will balance. After all, I used to disturb people plenty when I was drinking. . . ."

In Los Angeles I was too busy doing last things first to get to one of the dizzyingly numerous meetings. But I had lots of phone calls and a visit from De G., which made me realize that I was missing a lot of the best brand of earnest enthusiasm, humble seeking and sound A.A. His visit left my husband and me with a shot in the arm of inspiration.

Ray H. adopted me in San Francisco, bring-

ing Edward W. to dinner before driving me to a "skid-row" meeting newly started, held in a Polish church and socking it hard on a discussion of the spiritual angle. Coffee was served in an adjoining deserted bar afterward. We drove from there to the club rooms. They had taken an empty loft over a very gaudy saloon and every last inch of the work (with the exception of wiring for electricity) was done by members. It's large, exceedingly cheerful, with a room for an office, a coat room, a card room, a billiard room, and rest rooms and a meeting room that holds a good two hundred or more and in which there is an open cafeteria booth, manned by volunteers. This coffee-doughnut-cake-sandwich-soft-drink booth supports the club rooms. There are magazines galore, the start of a good library and ditto on records and it's open from noon till midnight. As in most cases a handful of people did the work and a smaller handful keeps it going (and gets most of the criticism), but, as Ray H. wryly observed, "Not one person who sawed boards, painted partitions, fitted in locks, scraped floors, hauled stuff up that long flight of stairs, or keeps on scrubbing—not one has gotten drunk. They got stiff, sore, chipped, bruised, chapped, grubby and their feelings hurt—but they've all stayed sober."

In Portland I lunched with Cecil F. and Leonard B. and was given a good history of the local set-up, a wonderful account of Bill's trip out there and of Marty's visit last season, and that afternoon Leonard drove me all over Portland and out to the famous Shadel Sanitarium. Inasmuch as the place was once prescribed for me, I wondered how I would have felt if a fortune-teller had said, back in November, 1943, "Well, refuse stubbornly if you like, but two years from now practically to the date, you'll be *in* the Shadel Sanitarium." There's a moral there somewhere, if I could figure it out.

In Seattle my time was brief, but we had an impromptu meeting Sunday night of some twenty or so men brought by the man whom I had been hearing about everywhere, Dale A.; and the next afternoon I met about nine of the women A.A.s. There was a phone call from Harold S., but our plane home was leaving at the time of his meeting. I don't know if the Seattle crowd is the most earnest I met up with, but I'd be tempted to bet. Anyway, they're doing a grand job and have some ambitious and worthy plans afoot.

What I do know is that we belong to the most amazing club in the world, that in the company of its members everywhere you go. It's next door to impossible to feel blue, desolate, idle or strange—and that I've come back a far better A.A. than ever.—*Grace O., Manhattan.*

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

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 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.

## A Ship Is Hell

*from Youngstown, Ohio*

I have just returned from a trip through hell; and found that the punishment for one who has been blessed with the knowledge of how to get sober and remain dry is far greater than it is for those unfortunates who have yet to hear of the A.A. program.

As an alcoholic, there is one thing I must tell you. No calamity is threatening nor is there a calamity that can befall you that could possibly be compared with the calamity that follows that first drink. I kicked around the most beautiful giggy that God ever bestowed on me—five years of complete and absolute sobriety—five years of great happiness for my wife and children and much pleasure for many others—sobriety, the key that opened the door to a way of life the beauty of which I thought lost to me forever.

It is with profound appreciation of the inner conflict that engulfed St. Paul that I recall the words he was caused to utter: "The good that I wish, I do not; the evil I wish not, I perform."

It was a long, lonesome journey, and as I thank God for my safe return I know that I must never permit a day to pass without offering a prayer or rendering a service for the help of those still out there.—*M.A.H.*

\* \* \*

## Moral Responsibility a Necessity

*From Glens Falls, N. Y.*

The thoughts on moral responsibility contributed by R.F.S. to the November issue of *The Grapevine* are most interesting. For it was upon this very proposition that I experienced the only real difficulty I have had in effectuating the A.A. program in the five years of my association with it. When the existence of A.A. was made known to me at that time, it seemed as though I could, for the first time in many years, look forward to relief and contemplate a life without alcohol. Heaven knows I had tried many, many times and ways to do something about my drinking before, as so many of us had.

For more than three years alter my initial

contact with A.A. I was dry. I knew for the first time in 18 years what it meant to be entirely free from alcohol for more than a year at a stretch. Then, in spite of continued A.A. activity and apparently, or outwardly, for no particular reason, I started drinking again—wildly, insanely, as I used to. I had six months of this before getting my "bearings" again and trying to think it out.

Many explanations of such an experience will present themselves rapidly enough—pride, self will, ego, fears had reestablished their hold over me, to be sure. Undoubtedly, I had not wholeheartedly worked on the program in its entirety. But why? Let's look at some of the thoughts that were passing through my alleged mind after almost four years of sobriety. I found myself wondering one day, "Why do I have to go on asking for help? I no longer drink; matter of fact I have no longer any desire to drink." About this time came the thought that I should be able to go about my affairs like any other person, free to choose if I should duck my moral responsibilities to self, family or community. And if I did compromise on these precepts what of it? Was not that a matter for me to decide? It was some months after this type of thinking became prevalent before I actually took a drink but I was a "dead duck" by then.

I realize now that I had "asked" for something—release from the evil (drink) that was destroying me—and got it! But that was only a beginning, a nucleus about which I could grow. But by not going all the way, and I include in that evading what R.F.S. calls a "lively sense of moral responsibility," I simply withered on the vine. I am convinced no very successful life can result from such a compromise. Actually what seems to have happened is this—here is a broken life, a warped one, no doubt, largely the result of many years of uncontrolled drinking and attendant wrong and unmoral thinking—upon such a tottering structure I attempted to erect a life of sobriety or rather to superimpose sobriety upon it—and let it go at that. No, there is much more to be done and that work is on the foundation of which, perhaps, one of the most important underpinnings is moral responsibility.

Maybe it is more than a matter of the desirability of a sense of moral responsibility and becomes a matter of the absolute necessity of it for continued growth in the moral psychology of A.A.—*L.E.D.*

## A Marine Gives Thanks

*From Japan*

*(The following excerpt is from a letter from a Marine sergeant now in Japan.)*

Don't let anyone ever tell you that honest, sincere prayer doesn't pay its rewards. Just after getting in the service I was asked if I thought I'd ever take a drink. From way back in my head I pulled out this one (and at the time probably meant it)—"Perhaps if my life is in danger, if I think I am about to die, I might take a drink." At Ie Shima, for over two solid months planes roared overhead both day and night, raining death and destruction on us below. Many of my buddies died and others were wounded, some for life. We were constantly on our guard for airborne Nips who were landing on nearby fields—more than once they were headed our way and turned back by night fighters. We were waiting for their frontal suicide attack. I never knew when my number might be up. However, I didn't drink and what's more, when I would crouch in my foxhole, feeling the ground shake with concussion, hearing the roar of diving enemy planes and the din of our own ack-ack and knowing only too well the dangers of shrapnel and falling flack, my insides would have a contented feeling and I would thank God for giving me those months of sobriety and ask Him to give me the power to continue along those ways if He saw fit to have me see that night out. I continue to give thanks and pray each day, not only for myself, but for all A.A.s.—*Dick F. M., Sgt., USMCR.*

\* \* \*

## Faith Paramount Issue

*From Lansing, Mich.*

As a reader of *The Grapevine* and one who has enjoyed A.A. and three years of sobriety I wish here to recall a letter in the October issue written by a Marine in the Pacific, "Dick F.M."

I wish to call to mind his "well put" ways, as he wrote: "We have the help of a Supreme Power (God) as we understand Him and A.A. and the ammunition is free." What a wonderful thought for us A.A.s and all to keep in mind. It is a truth that no man can deny.

I write as one who knows from my own past—35 years of alcoholism—that without a knowledge and faith in a Supreme Power we cannot carry on in sobriety.

I write a few lines to help someone else to understand this great Power ... as I came to understand, for I have observed many who have

*(Continued on Page 12)*

# Tradition Born of Our Anonymity

(Continued from Page 2)

(dear old Fitz M., who then lived in Washington) went over to the Library of Congress to investigate, he found exactly 12 books already titled *The Way Out*. When this information was passed around, we shivered at the possibility of being the "13th Way Out." So *Alcoholics Anonymous* became first choice. That's how we got a name for our book of experience, a name for our movement and, as we are now beginning to see, a tradition of the greatest spiritual import. God does move in mysterious ways His wonders to perform!

In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* there are only three references to the principle of anonymity. The foreword of our first edition states: "Being mostly business or professional folk some of us could not carry on our occupations if known" and "When writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, we urge each of our fellowship to omit his personal name, designating himself instead as 'a member of Alcoholics Anonymous,'" and then, "very earnestly we ask the press also to observe this request for otherwise we shall be greatly handicapped."

Since the publication of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in 1939 hundreds of A.A. groups have been formed. Every one of them asks these questions: "Just how anonymous are we supposed to be?" and "After all, what good is this principle of anonymity anyway?" To a great extent each group has settled upon its own interpretation. Naturally enough wide differences of opinion remain among us. Just what our anonymity means and just how far it ought to go are unsettled questions.

## How Opinion Differs

Though we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism as we once did, we still find individuals who are extremely sensitive about their connection with us. A few come in under assumed names. Others swear us to the deepest secrecy. They fear their connection with Alcoholics Anonymous may ruin their business or social position. At the other end of the scale of opinion we have the individual who declares that anonymity is a lot of childish nonsense. He feels it his bounden duty to cry his membership in Alcoholics Anonymous from the house tops. He points out that our A.A. fellowship contains people of renown, some of national importance. Why, he asks, shouldn't we capitalize their personal prestige just as any other organization would?

In between these extremes the shades of opinion are legion. Some groups, especially newer ones, conduct themselves like secret societies. They do not wish their activities known even to

friends. Nor do they propose to have preachers, doctors, or even their wives at any of their meetings. As for inviting in newspaper reporters—perish the thought! Other groups feel that their communities should know all about Alcoholics Anonymous. Though they print no names, they do seize every opportunity to advertise the activities of their group. They occasionally hold public or semi-public meetings where A.A.s appear on the platform by name. Doctors, clergymen and public officials are frequently invited to speak at such gatherings. Here and there a few A.A.s have dropped their anonymity completely. Their names, pictures and personal activities have appeared in the public prints. As A.A.s they have sometimes signed their names to articles telling of their membership.

So while it is quite evident that most of us believe in anonymity, our practice of the principle does vary a great deal.

## The Principle Is Vital

Of course, it should be the privilege, even the right, of each individual or group to handle anonymity as they wish. But to do that intelligently we shall need to be convinced that the principle is a good one for practically all of us; indeed we must realize that the future safely and effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous may depend upon its preservation. Each individual will then have to decide where he ought to draw the line—how far he ought to carry the principle in his own affairs, how far he may go in dropping his own anonymity without injury to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

The vital question is: Just where shall we fix this point where personalities fade out and anonymity begins?

As a matter of fact, few of us are anonymous so far as our daily contacts go. We have dropped anonymity at this level because we think our friends and associates ought to know about Alcoholics Anonymous and what it has done for us. We also wish to lose the fear of admitting that we are alcoholics. Though we earnestly request reporters not to disclose our identities, we frequently speak before semi-public gatherings under our right names. We wish to impress audiences that our alcoholism is a sickness we no longer fear to discuss before anyone. So far, so good. If, however, we venture beyond this limit we shall surely lose the principle of anonymity forever. If every A.A. felt free to publish his own name, picture and story we would soon be launched upon a vast orgy of personal publicity which obviously could have no limit whatever. Isn't this where, by the strongest kind of attraction, we must draw the line?

## A Suggestion

If I were asked to outline a tradition for anonymity it might run as follows:

1. It should be the privilege of each individual A.A. to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow A.A.s should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.

2. Conversely, the individual A.A. ought to respect the feeling of his local group as to their anonymity. If his group wishes to be more anonymous than he does, he ought to go along with them until they change their views.

3. With very rare exceptions it ought to be a national tradition that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish his name or picture (in connection with his Alcoholics Anonymous activities) in any medium of public circulation, or by radio. Of course, this should not restrict the free use of his name in other public activities, provided he does not disclose his A.A. connection.

4. If for some extraordinary reason, for the good of A.A. as a whole, a member thinks it desirable to completely drop his anonymity he should only do so after consulting the older members of his local group. If he is to make a nationwide public appearance as an A.A. the matter ought to be referred to our Central Office.

Of course, I am not for a moment thinking of these statements as rules or regulations; they merely suggest what would seem to be sound tradition for the future. In the last analysis every A.A. will have to search his own conscience.

If we are going to evolve a clear-cut tradition about anonymity we shall do it only through our usual process, viz:—trial and error, much discussion, collective judgment and common consent.

To stimulate further discussion I would like, in an early issue of *The Grapevine*, to review our experience with anonymity. That we shall eventually come up with the right answers I can have no doubt.

---

## Judge Gives A.A. Sentence

Boston, Mass., *American*: "Hearty endorsement of the work accomplished by Alcoholics Anonymous was given by Judge Stone today in disposing of a drunkenness case in East Cambridge court. The defendant was a 41-year-old Cambridge man who pleaded guilty after his wife told the court he was a good husband and a good provider except when drink got the best of him. 'I am going to give you a one-month sentence and suspend it,' Judge Stone said, 'and recommend that you investigate Alcoholics Anonymous in Boston. I have heard that this organization has accomplished much good. . . . I wish you luck.' "

# A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

A three-year-old dream has come true at last—with the official housewarming of the Miami Group's new club rooms at 23 North West South River Drive. The club, overlooking the Miami River, is equipped with a bar—where hot coffee and soft drinks are on tap at all times.

\* \* \*

The Tulsa, Okla., Group, which will be two years old next April and which now numbers 70 members, has opened new club rooms at 114½ North Denver Avenue; about 100 attended the opening festivities, including members from Oklahoma City and Muskogee, and Wichita and Topeka. . . . Arizona, with large membership in Phoenix and Tucson, has two new groups, in Mesa and Chandler. . . . Greenville, S. C., A.A.s are helping to organize groups in Anderson and Greer. . . . Four weeks after its inception, the Lynn, Mass., membership had grown from 5 to 50! . . . An Edinburg, Ind., A.A. addressed a directors meeting of the Lions Club. . . . The Allentown, Pa., Group (P. O. Box 532, Allentown) reports excellent progress, with its 20 members doing progressively effective work. One of their members spoke at the Optimist Club, an organization of civic-minded citizens interested in the formation of good character in the boys and men of the community.

\* \* \*

A member of the Honolulu Group, addressing Baton Rouge, La., A.A.s, told of the rapidly increasing membership not only in Honolulu, but in Pearl Harbor as well, with new members coming from other sections of Hawaii. . . . Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1945, was the *first anniversary* date of the Manchester, Conn., Group. . . . Speaking at the *first anniversary* gathering of the Peekskill, N. Y., Group, Rev. Mr. McKinney, chaplain of the Wallkill Prison, told of the fine A.A. work being done by the inmate members. . . . The Memphis, Tenn., Group, founded in April, 1944, has expanded from 3 members to 150, and plans to buy a large home, with an assembly hall and hospital facilities. . . . Benton Harbor, Mich., A.A.s entertained a large delegation of members from LaPorte, Ind., at the regular Sunday morning breakfast; one of the speakers was from Chicago.

\* \* \*

To do away with the frantic phoning sometimes necessary to locate a meeting, the Buffalo, N. Y., Group has given meeting schedules to the information boards of hotels, Y.M.C.A.s and police headquarters; the latter say they receive quite a few calls. . . . At the *first anniversary*

shindig of the Wichita, Kans., Group, which brought members from Kansas City, Topeka, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, guest speakers were Father Fred Mann, Catholic priest from Wichita, and the Rev. Raymond E. Dewey, a Methodist clergyman from McPherson. . . . Two A.A.s of the San Pedro, Calif., Group, which

originated in January, 1944, recently spoke before the Sun Pedro Rotary Club . . . as did Cincinnati members in their city. . . . The *fifth annual dinner* of the Pittsburgh, Pa., Group brought several hundred members, including two speakers, man and wife, from Morristown, N. J.

\* \* \*

## A.A. DIGEST

### Excerpts from Group Publications

*Central Bulletin*, Cleveland, Ohio:—"It is with an increasing feeling of alarm that we view current statements in the press . . . on the rehabilitation of the returning veteran. Why? Because there is little or no reference to alcoholism. In official circles the term 'alcoholic' is taboo. We were told by a representative of the Veterans' Administration that alcoholism is classified under misconduct; and that neither have any provisions been made for the care of alcoholics, nor is there any legislation allowing disability pensions for those unfortunates whose case history includes a reference to alcohol."

*The Eye-Opener*, Los Angeles, Calif.: "It is a good and safe rule to sojourn in every place as if you meant to spend your life there, never omitting an opportunity of doing a kindness, or speaking a true word or making a friend."—Ruskin. . . . 'Friendship is the highest degree of perfection in society.'—Montaigne. . . . 'Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence, strength of will, content, and a hundred other virtues which the idle never know.'—Charles Kingsley. . . . 'The race of mankind would perish did they cease to aid each other. We cannot exist without mutual help. All therefore that need aid have the right to ask it from their fellowmen; and no one who has the power of granting can refuse it without guilt.'—Waller Scott,"

*Alanews*, Dubuque, Iowa: "A group of (non-alcoholic) writers, artists and an M.D. were asked why they started to drink. Here are a few of the answers: 'I went to college'—Morris Fishbein, M.D.; 'Nature of the male'—Conde Nast; 'Prohibition made it fashionable'—Lucius Beebe; 'Thought it was smart'—Vincent Starrett; 'I'm a newspaper man'—Sterling North; 'I was thirsty'—William Saroyan."

The A.A. radio program, sponsored by the Hartford, Conn., Group, which last year won Hartford's WTIC Variety plaque for "contributing to the public health of the community," has returned to the air, over WTIC. The program dramatizes case histories to show that there is hope for the alcoholic. . . . The secretary of the Leavenworth Prison A.A.s reports that their group, formed in April, 1945, now has 55 members, and that "it has been said by officials that the group is the most constructive movement in the institution, and we are proud of our record." . . . The Seattle, Wash., Group had as guest speaker Major B. F. Ellison, manager of the men's social service of the Salvation Army. . . . The nearby Tacoma A.A.s meet every Monday evening at the Odd Fellows Hall. . . . The Mankato, Minn., Group is one of the most thriving in the state. . . . Water flowed freely at the *fifth annual meeting* of the Minneapolis Group, as 63 members who ended a year of sobriety were toasted. Some 800 members were present, many representing groups in the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois.

\* \* \*

The meeting which followed the Founders Day Banquet in Columbus, Ohio, with about 500 present, was broadcast over WHKC from a cutting—which is now available for playback by any of the other Ohio groups. . . . A party of San Antonio, Texas, A.A.s, 43 strong, traveled to Laredo to institute a group in that city. . . . The New Rochelle, N. Y., Group, inaugurated in June, 1944, with 12 members, now numbers 100. The group spends an average of 50 hours weekly aiding alcoholic patients at Grasslands Hospital, two members told the Rotary Club of New Rochelle. . . . An Army captain from Wakeman General Hospital, Edinburg, Ind., who is a member of the Philadelphia, Pa., Group, addressed the Presbyterian Men's Club of that city. . . . The Rev. Samuel D. of Rome, Ga., talking before the Washington, D. C., Group, told of resigning from a large pastorate in New York because of alcoholism,

## Vino Vignettes

(Continued from Page 5)

drunks only we had a regular circuit we played, like vaudeville in the old days.

"We used to start in New York City and stay here until we got fed up with the people in the bars we lived in—and I guess they got a little tired of us, too. Then we'd make Boston where we knew a lot of people and they'd be glad to see us when we arrived—you know, buy us drinks and things. After we got bored with Boston we'd shove off for the Adirondacks. That was kinda nice when we hit it at the right time of year.

"Frances and I made pretty good drinking partners in a way. For instance, when she got drunk she couldn't walk and couldn't think but she could still talk, and how! Me—I could walk and think but I couldn't talk. You see how okay that'd be because when we'd have to shake down someone for dough to get drinks, we'd plan it all out—I'd think out just what she should say, then I'd hold her up while we got to where the prospect was so she could make the touch.

"Just before we got mixed up with A.A. we had a pretty bad drunk here in New York. Frances got awfully sick. The landlord, where we were living at the time, saw her and called an ambulance from St. Vincent's Hospital. After she'd been gone a couple of days I thought I ought to go see how she was. At St. Vincent's I found out Frances had been sent over to Bellevue. What a time I had getting way over there! Took me several hours and I was drunker than a skunk when I landed. In fact I was so boiled they locked me right up and didn't act as though they believed I had a wife there. You

Cut This Out and Mail to:

*The Grapevine*

P.O. Box 328

Grand Central Annex, N. Y. 17, N. Y.

Herewith \$2.50 for one year's subscription to *The Grapevine* (Monthly).

For additional subscriptions enclose separate sheet with name and address clearly printed. Checks payable to *The Grapevine*.

Total Enclosed. . . . .

Renewal? (please check) . . . . .

PLEASE PRINT

Name . . . . .

Address . . . . .

Note: Subscriptions received prior to the 15th of January will begin with the February issue. As of January 1, the price of a year's subscription is \$2.50.

see, Frances had been discharged and was on her way home while I was on my way to see her.

"This A.A. program has meant everything in the world to us. We never had what you'd call a home—just a room in some furnished dump and often we didn't even have that. Now we have a nice apartment with all our own furniture and we both have money in the bank . . . Frances and I work out this A.A. program a little bit differently but that doesn't matter. Frances runs A.A. meetings at the Salvation Army on the Bowery every Tuesday night, works with a lot of the girls and women who've been sentenced to the women's jail here in the city or committed to the State Hospital at Rockland, and those in the alcoholic ward at Bellevue. She's doing one swell job and I've got my hat off to her. I'm not the kind of guy who does very well at a meeting—you know, making a speech. I do my 12th Step work talking to fellows alone or when they're down at our apartment. I've got a regular job and I'm beginning to write short stories in my spare time.

"Well, I guess I don't have to say any more to prove A.A. has changed things for us, do I?"

## Mail Call

(Continued from Page 9)

trouble in making A.A. click . . . those who do not understand and accept this 3rd Step.

What made us drink when we knew we were drinking to our own destruction? Surely this Power of our own salvation did not make us drink or do wrong. We must then concede two powers greater than ourselves . . . the Voice of the Holy Spirit and the voice of Satan. . . . Therefore, everyone is a power in himself for good or for evil. . . . I will quote from a Scripture that helped me to get both feet on this 3rd Step:

"God created all mankind in His way of the Holy Spirit, as the likeness of His own angels, to dwell at peace in this world and maintains it for our own and His own spirit, the Holy Spirit, but the spirit of evil also came and he came only to corrupt and destroy and he, too, has power over the mind of all mankind."

It is proven that this 3rd Step must go hand in hand with A.A. or we cannot put away or control this power of evil, which is also greater than our own.

A.A. works when we join together in any way to promote our own betterment. We bring the power of the Holy Spirit . . . and we join with a Power greater than our own to lick this power that is out to destroy us.

This mind of ours is a house divided against itself and we ourselves have the right to choose the good or evil—A.A. and sobriety, or alcohol.—L.F.M.

## Don't Get Cocky!

(Continued from Page 5)

ing story," I was beginning to get a little fed up with it all. I began to attend only two meetings a week. Later, I went to one meeting a week—maybe.

It was about this time that I began to lose my humility about my drinking problem. I was feeling fine. I was sober. Undoubtedly, my work had improved. Somehow, I had gained a new feeling of self-confidence in my affairs. I had found the solution to my problem and therefore I had no further use for A.A. Thank God, I wouldn't have to go around to "that damned church" to be bored for two hours!

When someone asked me why I stopped drinking, I would say that I had found a way to "lick the stuff myself." When fellow A.A.s would call me for lunch or ask why I hadn't been around to meetings, I made excuses. When the non-alcoholic drinkers on the newspaper went, over to Sam's for a few drinks, I went along just to show them how I could stay there without drinking and have as much fun as anybody. Oh! Brother, did I have the answer!

Of course, the inevitable happened. Over at Sam's one morning I felt particularly cocky and ordered a glass of ale. I sipped the ale with anticipation and pleasure. I had another. After a third, I left and went to my apartment for what I later claimed was the "best night's sleep I'd had in years."

The next day, I felt fine. I was more convinced than ever that I could "hold my whiskey" like anyone else. And so, I gradually returned to my old way of life. In less than two weeks, I was in the squirrel cage. This time it took me about six weeks and two trips to the hospital to get sobered up. Somehow, I kept my job and when I returned to the newsroom, the A.A. photographer was waiting for me.

He asked me to go over to the club with him but he didn't lecture to me. In fact, he laughed about it. He told me that when he saw me drinking he knew what would happen. He felt that I had to learn to accept A.A. "the hard way."

I am back again in A.A. I am attending meetings two or three times a week. I have been sober about ten months now by living the A.A. way. And I have learned something: If you get cocky in A.A., brother, you're going to lose A.A., and if you lose A.A., you are losing the *only solution* to your drinking problem.

J.W.T., Manhattan.

\* \* \*

Lest we forget, it's well to remember the old saying that nobody can go from heel to halo in three weeks.