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A.A. Discussed on "We, the People" Program

Editor's note: In answer to numerous requests, *The Grapevine* reprints that portion of the *We The People* radio program on Sunday, May 4, in which Marty M. explained Alcoholics Anonymous and the work of the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism.

BOULTON: (Master of Ceremonies): The story of the young lady who is beside me now at our microphone, can be told in just seven words. I want her to repeat those seven words for you.

Marty: For ten years I was an alcoholic.

B: That's a shocking statement isn't it? And what courage it must take to make such an admission. But it's just that sort of courage that has made this young lady who is our guest on *We the People* one of the leaders in the fight against alcoholism. She is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and executive director of the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. Welcome to *We The People*.

M: Thank you, Mr. Boulton. The name Alcoholics Anonymous speaks for itself. We are a group of alcoholics who have anonymously banded together to help ourselves and each other get well. We have preferred to remain anonymous for obvious reasons. But - as director of the National Committee for Education on

Alcoholism, I am glad to use my name. The purpose of the National Committee is to teach people the truth about alcoholism - that this is a disease - and alcoholics are sick people. By using my name and telling my story, I believe I can further that truth. My name is Mrs. Marty Mann, and I live here in New York City.

B: Mrs. Mann, it seems incredible that a young and beautiful woman like you should have once been an alcoholic.

M: Mr. Boulton, I still am an alcoholic.

B: But - I thought you'd been cured.

M: Oh, no. You must realize that alcoholism is a disease - a disease which today is as prevalent as tuberculosis or cancer. My illness has been arrested, and I think and hope it will stay that way, but people like me can never safely touch alcohol again, so you can never say we're cured.

B: Mrs. Mann, before you continue your story, I want to tell our listeners why we invited you to be our guest tonight. Alcoholism is mounting at an astounding rate in this country. Reliable sources have informed us that there are an estimated three million alcoholics, and that one in every six are women. *We The People* feel that the hush-hush policy

that has always surrounded this subject will no longer work in the face of such figures, and that by bringing it out into the open we may contribute one step toward combatting the problem.

M: Mr. Boulton, I'm so glad you said that, because that's the reason I consented to come on this program tonight. I don't enjoy airing my personal life, but perhaps others may profit by my counsel.

B: Mrs. Mann, will you tell us now how or why it was you started to drink to excess?

M: First let me tell you a little bit about my background. I was born in Chicago, and my family had a good deal of money. I had everything a girl could ask for. I went to a boarding school, finished abroad, and had the usual coming-out party when I returned. I was young and happy and gay and thought it was fun to drink.

B: How old were you then?

M: Eighteen. If that seems young to you - remember that was in the early 20's, and that was the era when decent young men thought it was smart to carry hip flasks. I didn't know then - in fact I didn't find out until seven years ago - that I'm one of those people who should

never have tasted liquor. I thought I could drink in moderation. I thought I could stop anytime I wanted to.

B: When did you discover that you couldn't stop?

M: A couple of years before I landed in a sanitarium. But those years in between were frightful and frightening. I had married an alcoholic. He should have been an example to me, but he wasn't. After our divorce I drank even more. Then my family suffered financial reverses, and I had to go to work. My drinking still *seemed* under control. Then I remember later telling myself I was drinking for business reasons. Still later it was to calm my nerves, for by then the liquor was beginning to affect my nervous system. I thought I was going crazy. I had to have a drink to make myself feel normal. I reached the melancholic stage and twice tried to commit suicide. I was a confirmed drunk - and didn't know it. It was then that my friends persuaded me to go to a sanitarium.

B: What treatment did they use there?

M: Psychiatric treatment and it helped a lot - but not enough. Then one day my doctor handed me a copy of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. I was furious with him. I was not an alcoholic! In a fit of temper I threw the book across the room. The book landed on the floor open. More angry than ever I went across the room to pick it up and my eyes lighted on the words, "We cannot live with anger." The words were so apropos of my mood it

startled me, and I began to read. As I read, the truth became apparent, and I admitted to myself for the first time - I was an alcoholic.

B: Well, then - I assume that Alcoholics Anonymous is responsible for your rehabilitation.

M: Indeed they are. They didn't lecture me, or look down on me, or make me sign a pledge. They did advise me to promise myself that I would not drink for 24 hours, and when the 24 hours were past, to make myself another promise.

They taught me to live without alcohol. I slipped once or twice in the beginning, but today, because of their help, I'm well. We know the alcoholic can be helped and is worth helping. We feel this is a public health problem, and therefore a public responsibility. We want the public to realize drunks shouldn't be jailed, but sent to hospitals - because a drunk is as sick as a man with a mortal disease. But he can, with proper treatment, become a useful citizen. I am proof of that. And I am devoting all my energies to aid those who are afflicted with this dread disease.