

June 1950

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

A REPORT
FOR DR. BOB

Since all the fireworks in Cleveland come July 28-30 will be in celebration of Dr. Bob's 15th anniversary--and the birth of AA itself--and since Dr. Bob, at the time this is being written, is recovering in St. Thomas Hospital in Akron — we're addressing this Conference report to him personally! It will, we're sure, make excellent reading for a speedy convalescence.

Well, Dr. Bob, the *Grapevine* went out to Cleveland so as to make a first hand report. Dick S. introduced us to his committee. And it seems to us that the entire city of Cleveland is on that Committee and everybody working hard for the success of AAs First International Conference and to make your 15th anniversary one of the most memorable events in all AA history!

Cleveland is all set to handle anywhere from 5,000 to 50,000 and whatever the final number is, there will be accommodations for all! Naturally, everybody can't have a corner room in the Headquarters hotel. But if each group Secretary will poll his members, get their registrations (\$1.50 per person) and their bids for room reservations in as *early as possible*.

Many of those who are planning to come, can't know for sure, for one good reason or another, whether they'll be able to make it. So *the unavoidable* 11th hour rush will be terrific. Thus, on behalf of Dick and his Committee, we beg, implore and plead with Secretaries to get all reservations and registrations in *now!*

With almost two months still to go, the response thus far has been little short of phenomenal. Of course, we're used to phenomenons in AA but when you hear of people coming from the 48 states, from Canada, Europe, South Africa, the Middle East and the South Pacific, it makes you marvel once again at what a tremendous force went into operation that day you met Bill!

Not only the size and scope of

this response but the quality of the interest shown is a further indication that AA has indeed 'come of age'. AAs from everywhere have been very specific about what they want to discuss and hear discussed. This information is invaluable to the committee in programming the Conference. Already they know they can schedule sessions for such purely AA subjects as 'Sponsorship', '12th Step Work', 'Inter Group Operations', 'Anonymity' and many others. There'll be meetings devoted to the special problems of AA women and to those of younger people now coming into AA in larger and larger numbers. And, after being neglected pretty much since the early days, the non-alcoholic AA wives and husbands are being heard from. They have a program of their own and will play a large part in the Conference's success.

The greatest common interest, however, is shown in the AA Traditions. As we grow individually and collectively, we all realized that we need to pool our experience; to benefit by past mistakes; and to be governed, not by hard and fast rules, but by Divine guidance in our stewardship of a redemptive movement which we only hold in trust for those who still need what we have been fortunate enough to possess. Yes, our Traditions will be at the very core of the Conference.

Outsiders will be in our midst in Cleveland, not as curiosity seek-

ers, but for very worthwhile purposes. Personnel directors and top executives of large employer firms want to see the application of the AA Program to their businesses. They're interested in the humanitarian angle, of course. But they also want to understand the purely economic aspect of 'reclaiming' valuable (but alcoholic) employees, reducing their labor turnover, etc.

Doctors and hospital directors want to learn how AA has worked with these institutions to get maximum results. They're interested in how you work it there at St. Thomas, Dr. Bob. And at Knickerbocker and St. Johns in New York. They want to know about rest homes and farms.

Penal authorities want to know how AA has worked out in places like San Quentin, Sing Sing, Walkhill and other places of detention where there is enough experience to serve as a pattern for others. City magistrates also want to know how it all works at the municipal level.

Thus there will be major sessions on "AA in Industry", "Hospitalization and the Treatment of the Prospective AA," "AA in Penal Institutions, Federal, State and Municipal."

The 'Main Events', of course, will be (1) The Banquet, with AAs from all over the world heard from via traveling mike. No formal speeches. And (2) the *main* 'Main Event'—the 'Big Meeting' with you,

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There Wasn't Time For a Stitch in Nine



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Dr. Bob, and Bill as the only speakers. That tremendous roar you're going to hear will merely be thousands of drunks from all over the world trying to tell you how much we love you and how grateful we are for what you have given us and our families!

That's about as much as your Committee can tell you at the moment, Dr. Bob. But there will be lots more. Every Cleveland group will hold 'Open House' throughout the Conference. There'll be baseball parties—the Red Sox will be in town that week-end. There'll be dances. There'll be teas—with real tea served too.

It will be a joyful gathering, Dr. Bob. Many of the faraway AAs (whose registrations are in early enough) will start their trip in an

ordinary train seat. At some point, they'll be switched into an 'all AA car' and at still another point of convergence, these cars will be hooked up into an all-AA train. So some of the boys and girls will arrive in Cleveland in real style. There will be caravans of automobiles, AAs from the same areas, north, south, east, and west, traveling together. There will be special busses and, perhaps, a chartered plane or two bringing in some of the more 'flush' bretheren.

At any rate, Dr. Bob, it's going to be the gol darnest birthday party you or anybody else ever had. It's something that no AA wants to miss for we won't be having anything like this except maybe once every five or perhaps 10 years.

So get good and well, Doc! It's *your* party!

Responsibility

IN AA we must learn to stop expecting others to do as we think they should. We are responsible only for our own conduct: If we take care of our own affairs well, we have enough to do.

How often we feel that we must regulate the life of another person. The person may know more about life than we do, but still we subject him to criticism because he does not conform to our code of conduct.

We can give *the* best example to another by living so that he will seek to emulate our life. This silent method of helping him is infinitely more forceful than that of pointing to our own virtues and hoping to have him imitate them.

A great reform would take place in the world if we should try to live truth instead of trying to preach it. After all, our friends are interested in seeing that truth work: they care surprisingly little for theory.
—*Robbie., Kansas City, Missouri*

WE are told that a certain amount of apprehension exists because the large International Conference at Cleveland in July may seriously affect attendance at other regional gatherings near that date; also that the Cleveland Conference has been sponsored heavily by the Foundation, *Grapevine*, Dr. Bob and myself thus placing the Cleveland project in a preferred position.

That there is some truth in these assertions is self evident; enough, I think, to warrant an explanatory statement.

Like most new ideas in AA that catch on, this one went from the size of a man's hand to cloudburst dimensions in a few weeks. It was realized after the International Conference idea had swept the Middle west—and all too late—that such a gathering might draw AAs away from other regional meetings, notably the fine Southeastern Convention to be held at Miami in June.

Nor was there any possibility of shifting the Cleveland date, for midsummer was the only possible time when there would be enough hotel space to hold the great crowd expected.

Personally, I'm regretful this has happened, and I hope no one will pass up his regional meeting because seized with the fever to be at Cleveland. I guess it's just one of those things—but one which needn't happen again.

In *The A.A. Grapevine*, Dr. Bob and I recently set forth several very special reasons for holding our first AA "International" in this good year, 1950. But we did not wish to set any precedent for such an International gathering yearly; once in every five or ten summers may prove enough.

So naturally, when 1955 or 1960 rolls around, we shall certainly give everybody one year's notice, at least!