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A Monthly Journal devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, in the hope that it may prove a unifying bond to all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.

JACK ALEXANDER OF SAT EVE POST FAME THOUGHT A.A.s WERE PULLING HIS LEG

Ordinarily, diabetes isn't rated as one of the hazards of reporting, but the Alcoholics Anonymous article in the *Saturday Evening Post* came close to costing me my liver, and maybe A.A. neophytes ought to be told this when they are handed copies of the article to read. It might impress them. In the course of my fact gathering, I drank enough Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, ginger ale, Moxie and Sweetie to float the Saratoga. Then there was the thickly frosted cake so beloved of A.A. gatherings, and the heavily sweetened coffee, and the candy. Nobody can tell me that alcoholism isn't due solely to an abnormal craving for sugar, not even a learned psychiatrist. Otherwise the A.A. assignment was a pleasure.

It began when the *Post* asked me to look into A. A. as a possible article subject. All I knew of alcoholism at the time was that, like most other non-alcoholics, I had had my hand bitten (and my nose punched) on numerous occasions by alcoholic pals to whom I had extended a hand—unwisely, it always seemed afterward. Anyway, I had an understandable skepticism about the whole business.

My first contact with actual A.A.s came when a group of four of them called at my apartment one afternoon. This session was pleasant, but it didn't help my skepticism any. Each one introduced himself as an alcoholic who had gone "dry," as the official expression has it. They were good-looking and well-dressed and, as we sat around drinking Coca-Cola (which was all they would take), they spun yarns about their horrendous drinking misadventures. The stories sounded spurious, and after the visitors had left, I had a strong suspicion that my leg was being pulled. They had behaved like a bunch of actors sent out by some Broadway casting agency.

Next morning I took the subway to the headquarters of Alcoholics Anonymous in downtown Manhattan, where I met Bill W. This Bill W. is a very disarming guy and an expert at indoctrinating the stranger into the psychology, psychiatry, physiology, pharmacology and folklore of alcoholism. He spent the good part of a couple of days telling me what it was all about. It was an interesting experience, but at the end of it my fingers were still crossed. He knew it, of course, without my saying it, and in the days that followed he took me to the homes of some of the A.A.s, where I got a chance to talk to the wives, too. My skepticism suffered a few minor scratches, but not enough to hurt. Then Bill shepherded me to a few A.A. meetings at a clubhouse somewhere in the West Twenties. Here were all manner of alcoholics, many of them, the nibblers at the fringe of the movement, still fragrant of liquor and needing a shave. Now I know I was among a few genuine alcoholics anyway. The bearded, fume-breathing lads were A.A. skeptics, too, and now I had some company.

The week spent with Bill W. was a success from one standpoint. I knew I had the makings of a readable report but, unfortunately, I didn't quite believe in it and told Bill so. He asked why I didn't look in on the A.A.s in other cities and see what went on there. I agreed to do this, and we mapped out an itinerary. I went to Philadelphia, first, and some of the local A.A.s took me to the psychopathic ward of Philadelphia General Hospital and showed me how they work on the alcoholic inmates. In that gloomy place, it was an impressive thing to see men who had bounced in and out of the ward themselves patiently jawing a man who was still haggard and shak-

ing from a binge that wound up in the gutter.

Akron was the next stop. Bill met me there and promptly introduced me to Doc S., who is another hard man to disbelieve. There were more hospital visits, an A.A. meeting, and interviews with people who a year or two before were undergoing varying forms of the blind staggers. Now they seemed calm, well-spoken, steady-handed and prosperous, at least mildly prosperous.

Doc S. drove us both from Akron to Cleveland one night and the same pattern was repeated. The universality of alcoholism was more apparent here. In Akron it had been mostly factory workers. In Cleveland there were lawyers, accountants and other professional men, in addition to laborers. And again the same stories. The pattern was repeated also in Chicago, the only variation there being the presence at the meetings of a number of newspapermen. I had spent most of my working life on newspapers and I could really talk to these men. The real clincher, though, came in St. Louis, which is my hometown. Here I met a number of my own friends who were A.A.s, and the last remnants of skepticism vanished. Once rollicking rumpots, they were now sober. It didn't seem possible, but there it was.

When the article was published, the reader
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MEMO TO ALL JUNE SUBSCRIBERS:

With this issue, *The Grapevine* has completed its first year of publication. The 165 of you who subscribed last June are now 2,000 strong. But you 165 were our mainstay and support at the beginning and for this we are deeply grateful. You wrote us letters of encouragement, you sent us material, you brought us new subscribers. A thousand thanks; and may each one of you like the paper you helped to start well enough to renew your subscription. *The Grapevine Staff.*

EDITORIAL:

On the 7th Step

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

We all know that it is God's will that we live clean, wholesome lives; that we think clearly and become persons of honest decision. This we know we cannot do until we become our real selves, so, in desperation, we alcoholics revert to prayer. We humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings; to restore us to our natural selves, so that we may think clearly on our problems.

Emerson says, "None will ever solve the problem of his character according to our prejudice, but only in his own high unprecedented way."

Character is undoubtedly accumulative, and in removing shortcomings it stands to reason that we are striving to build character. This can be done by observing our errors, and, one at a time, correcting them on the spot.

We have already accepted this "Power greater than ourselves" as a reality. Something to which we can pray, expecting to receive help. So now we ask for courage to look at our shortcomings honestly. To recognize them for what they really are, and not what we might wish them to be.

What are some of our shortcomings? Let us list just a few: 1. Excessive drinking. 2. Resenting help. 3. Resenting the good fortune of others. 4. Defending ourselves when we know we are in the wrong. 5. Jealousy and envy of all kinds. 6. Shunning responsibility.

Through the grace of God we have found A.A., which teaches us that we are sick people and that alcohol in any form or amount is out. So we stop drinking. That takes care of our number one problem.

We must be willing to accept help of all kinds without resentment. This takes a little time, as we are the world's most sensitive persons. We know too well that we have neglected all of our talents and abilities for alcohol, and we have terribly guilty feelings, made more acute by persons who are already in better circumstances than we are. Nevertheless, we learn to suffer our hurt feelings and start building a constructive, happy life.

Defending what we call our "pride" is one of the most difficult shortcomings to remove. Many of us have thought of pride as something virtuous, something to be honored. Well, what have we left, we who are humbly seeking help, that we can put on exhibition as virtue? Often we cannot actually put our finger on anything in our make-up of which we are really proud. So we break down our false pride, and exchange it for humility.

The most beautiful art in the world is simple, with few lines, little fuss and complications. So we try being simple for a change. Just plain honest simplicity. We look for the best in our fellow man, "Pardon the wrong in him; hark to the song in him."

By accepting God's help, we learn to think clearly; to play fairly; and to give generously.

Elizabeth W., Boston, Mass.

Letters to The

Dear Grapevine: As far as George and I know, our 6-lb, 11-oz. Beulah May is the first "all A.A. baby" born to a couple, both A.A.s, who met in an A.A. group. We met in the Baltimore group in 1942, and now we thank A.A. not only for our rehabilitation but for our dear little girl as well.

Marian May R., Hartford group, Conn.

Dear Grapevine: How often a person will go to a friend, asking advice, and all the while he has definitely decided upon the course he will follow. Actually he is not seeking advice; he wants approval.

We alcoholics have for years devoted a great deal of our efforts to changing rules to fit our actions. Whenever we could not or would not conform, we simply changed the rules.

Five, years ago I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. Too often today, when I think I am asking God for advice, I am actually looking for what I want to do. I am still trying to change the rules to suit my actions.

Much to our surprise, after we went into A.A. we found that we had not been trying to quit drinking. We did not want to quit: all our efforts were devoted to trying to learn to drink normally. Not until we really had a desire to quit did we have any success. A reluctant decision to live, by God's will as amended by ourselves is not enough.

A sincere desire for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out should be our daily prayer.

A good question to ask ourselves frequently: What am I looking for, advice or approval?
Roy Y., Tampa, Florida

Dear Grapevine: The average alcoholic is unable to face facts. In the matter of drinking as it concerns him, his vision has become blurred, distorted. Only in brief periods of remorse or despair does he appreciate fully, and realize the truth that two plus two equals four.

Should he question his physician regarding his problem; and should the doctor explain to him carefully, logically the nature of the condition, how it came about, what must and can be done, his answer is likely to be: "Yes, doctor, I know, but you see my case is different." (His mother or his father treated him thus, or so; he had an injury in childhood or a prolonged illness which left him a weak this

Grapevine...

or that; there was too much money, or too little; he has always been high-strung, or moody or shy; or what will you.)

If he should go to an A.A. meeting, he may join in the talk, ask questions, or just listen. Just listening, he begins to see himself as others see him; his case does not seem so different; certainly he is not alone.

Self pity or self conceit, neither seems appropriate to the occasion.

These people, he realizes, are all in the same boat; they have been through the same shipwreck; and they're all pulling in the same direction—toward the dryland.

Perhaps he had better grab the, gunwale and hang on, for a while anyway.

And he couldn't fool these people if he wanted—they've been there. They have no interest in fooling him.

Nor would there be any point in holding out on them; for they are, not "doing their stuff," delivering the goods, for a fee. There isn't tiny fee or obligation or exaction of any sort.

These men and women are alcoholic, like himself. Maybe they are not getting as much fun or as much amusement out of life as they did (and he did) say ten or twenty years ago. But they must be putting a lot more into it (which is one way, and the only way, of "pursuing" happiness.)

The thing seems straightforward, honest, and it makes sense. These people have solved their main problem. They will be glad to tell him how they managed, and to give him a hand if he needs it—until he loses his sea legs.

He begins to see more clearly that two plus two does make four—just as it always has.

An Anonymous M.D., Conn.

Dear Grapevine: I believe I was a potential alcoholic from the beginning, although I didn't actually become one until after quite a few years of drinking. I was the type that usually becomes an alcoholic. I was sort of an odd child. I had an inferiority complex. I was lonely. I didn't know how to make friends. I kept a sort of wall between myself and other people. And I took to drinking as a duck takes to water.

I believe that every alcoholic has a personality problem. He drinks to escape from life, to counteract a feeling of loneliness or inferiority, or because of some emotional conflict within himself, so that he cannot adjust

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WOMEN ALCOHOLICS HAVE A TOUGHER FIGHT

Women alcoholics do have special problems. To begin with, the double standard works overtime for them. Even before they become alcoholic they're in a different position from men who drink. They are expected to handle it if they drink at all. "No one likes to see a woman drunk" is a phrase we've all heard ad nauseam. As a matter of fact, we don't like to see it ourselves, much less to see it in the mirror, but if we're alcoholic there isn't much choice.

There is one thing a woman usually can do about it though, and most of them do. She can do her drinking privately. She can "hole up" and present the world with a picture "of besetting headaches, practically of chronic invalidism. She can learn more about hiding her liquor in a few months of alcoholism than most men alcoholics learn in years. In the process, she also learns a great deal about hiding her true thoughts—in other words, about dishonest thinking. And finally, a great many women alcoholics learn the last retreat from possible exposure: they discover that sedatives are easily hidden, can be taken almost unobserved, and leave no smell. And that they produce the same effect as quantities of liquor . . . with ten times the danger.

Added to her own efforts to hide the fact of her alcoholism are the well-meaning efforts of her family to hide her shame—their shame—from the world. Regardless of the fact that such efforts rarely deceive anyone, they are desperately pursued to the bitter, often fatal, end.

What, in that case, has killed these "hidden alcoholics," these "protected" women? Not alcoholism. Stigma.

We women who have found the answer to our alcoholic problem in A.A. have learned also that there should be no stigma attached to this alcoholic disease so many of us share. We have learned that it is nothing to be ashamed of, that, it is an illness like any other, with a name and symptoms, and we have learned that we can get well.

Many of us found it almost impossibly difficult to take the first step, to admit that we were what we had considered that shameful thing, an alcoholic. What would people say? Wouldn't it be still worse than our hidden, bitterly painful, pre-A.A. state? Could we possibly admit anything honestly any more? We'd been away from reality so long—we'd twisted and turned so adroitly in our speech, our actions, and in our very thoughts—could we come back? And if we tried, would they let us? Would we be acceptable? Or would

the double standard work here too?

In A.A. groups where there are already a few women members, some of these early doubts can be quickly resolved. Those who dared to take the plunge early and alone into this seeming man's world, found themselves not in icy waters, but in a warm fellowship. They in turn can take the newcomer's hand and lead her into a world where there is real equality—where all are alcoholics together, acceptable to their own admission of that fact. They can help her to feel no longer alone, a marked creature to be hidden and shunned, but a wanted and needed part of a vital, living society of her own kind.

The return to honesty is hard for all alcoholics, but for most women it is harder than for men. Everything in the pattern of a woman alcoholic has conspired to make her dishonest. It hasn't been entirely her fault; the world and its ways are much to blame. But we women can get there as well as the men—witness the number of us, good A.A. members (one in ten of our total membership). We need perhaps a little more help, a little more tolerance, a little more time. We need extra education on the sedative problem, too often for us the Siamese twin of our alcoholism. We need the example and encouragement of other women, and we need to give that example and encouragement to those hidden women alcoholics who need us.

Those of us who are already well and happy members of A.A. have a great responsibility in the battle against stigma. If we can freely and proudly admit our A.A. membership when there is an opportunity to do so, if we will speak at meetings whenever we can, and work with other women, we can win that battle. Women in smaller cities and towns have the toughest fight on their hands, for the smaller the community, the more monstrously big grows the ugly head of stigma, fed on ignorance, misunderstanding, and gossip. Only the light of knowledge will eliminate that monster, and the light of knowledge is best shed through the shining light of human example. One woman, free of her illness, happy and well and ready to tell how it was done, can perhaps set hundreds more free.

Women alcoholics (and one-sixth of all alcoholics in the United States are women) are today, in ever-increasing numbers, seeking the answer to their alcoholic problem in A.A. It hasn't been easy for us to reach them, and it hasn't been easy for them to reach out to us—but it is getting easier all the time. We women are making it so. *Marty M., New York*

Do You Know: THAT YOUR CANDOUR IS CONTAGIOUS

I've been in A.A. for two years and during this time I have told hundreds of people about it. As a writer it is my business to know all kinds of people. As an individual, it is my pleasure to do so. I have friends and friendly acquaintances of all ages, backgrounds, religious creeds, and types of education. People in every imaginable occupation from cook to Cabinet Member. Also in these two years, I have met countless strangers, made endless new acquaintances. Whenever the subject has come up, I have said that I don't drink any more. And if people have shown any interest I've told them all about A.A. But in all this time I have had only one hostile reaction, and that was from a woman who is now considering A.A. for herself.

My reasons for talking so freely are several. First (but not the most important) is my own selfish reason. I am so relieved, so glad to say I am an alcoholic. To know why I was sick, to know that I am not immoral, evil, or crazy. I am so glad to be able, to go back to those people before whom I got drunk in the past, before; whom I behaved badly, and be able to say: Look. I am an alcoholic. That's why I acted the way I did. Now I don't have, to get that way any more. For this load is now lifted. This awful load of shame, fear and guilt. Instead of avoiding people's eyes, instead of wondering what they think of me, instead of crossing the street when I see them coming, I can keep on walking down the street, say hello, shake hands, and smile.

My other reasons stem from this one, and yet they are more important reasons. For I feel that my own unembarrassed attitude, my own frankness and freedom in the matter, affects everyone with whom I come in contact,

and with whom I talk. Freedom from guilt and embarrassment is the only altitude that we alcoholics can have. If we want to "forget" about our drinking and conceal our past and pretend or wish we weren't, in A.A., then we have not yet forgiven ourselves. It is highly important that we forgive ourselves, utterly, or others won't forgive us. They will continue to sense in us shame and fear. Then they in turn will feel uneasy. They will continue to think of the subject as a moral issue, censurable, objectionable. We must be ready to say to people what we say to ourselves. That our past is our sick behaviour, and that our present and our future is our convalescent and our well behaviour. That we are living from day to day, in our new present, which is our strong secure future, forever. Herein lies all the hope of our lives.

I think that this altitude within ourselves is most contagious. Over and over I have heard from other A.A.s how they have, gone to a frightening boss, and talked to him, only to find him friendly and helpful. How they have won over stiff-necked relatives, or a narrow-minded community, in the most magical and wonderful way. For seldom does anyone, lose a job, a friend, the esteem of his neighbors because of not drinking. It is drinking and getting drunk that bothers friends, relatives, neighbors. And even this is being looked on with more and more understanding, thanks to the frank attitude of the average A.A. For the more people learn about A.A., the more they understand what alcoholism is, the more lenient they become toward the alcoholic and his problems. And the easier it is for the alcoholic to shed his fears, and face himself.

I found like a bushel of sweetness and light. Alas, I am far from that. There are plenty of people around these United States (not to say a few in Europe) who hate my eyeteeth and wish I were pushing up buttercups this very minute. I have not gotten them all to forgive me. I'll be doing well if I get half of them to do so before I'm through. Yet I think that as I progress in A.A., I will be able to get a few of them to realize that I'm not responsible for what I did *then*. That I am trying, to the best of my ability, to make amends, through 12th step work, and in all other possible ways, and that I, like everybody else, who is working at A.A. have undergone a change that is a miracle.

This brings me to my last reason for telling the world. When I say to friends and strangers, I'm an alcoholic, I belong to Alcoholics Anonymous, I am saying something wonderful, something good. I am saying, Look at me now. Look at what I was. Maybe I'm not much now. But I am well. I am happy. Happier than I've ever been in my life. I am no longer scared to death. I can work. I can love people. I have hundreds of new friends who understand what I went through because they went through it too. I am no longer lonely, and alone. From being a dead weight, and useless, I have, become of great use. Not because of myself as an individual, but because of what I'm a part of. For this thing I'm a part of is one of the grimmest things this world has ever seen. Hope, and belief in the goodness of people, and love. In this present world, where we are living in the precarious shadow of our mistakes, is it not wonderful to belong to a thing like this? I'll tell the world it is.

Felicia G., New York

One Woman Alcoholic Writes to Another

Dear Pola,

I felt very unhappy about you when I hung up the other evening. I do so wish I could help you. If I could only make you understand what it is necessary for you to do in order to feel as happy as I do now. We are very much alike, you know—at least we were until I got the A. A. program.

The stumbling block with you, as I see it—and this was the hardest thing for me to do, too—is your reluctance to give in to anything. You want to be Pola—you have your own ideas—your own personality—your own will. And because you've had to make your own way in life you trust no one but yourself. I

was exactly like that myself. I felt, that other people didn't understand; only *I* knew what I had to do; only *I* knew what was good for me. But I was able to see that under my own management I had become a drunk, so that possibly there was something wrong with my way of seeing things. As soon as I admitted that, I opened up my mind and listened to others.

You haven't done that yet. You listen with your ears, but your mind is still listening to Pola. Forgive me, but Pola still wants to drink because the subconscious Pola is unhappy about the lies, the evasions, the boastfulness and the stubborn will of the conscious

Pola. You can't kid your subconscious—your real self.

All the criticism you have for A.A. you've built up because you don't, want to give up your own individuality. At least that's what you call it; that's what I called it, too. But, Pola, I'm just as much the individual now. I'm just not so stubborn, so self-willed, so positive. I'm listening to others. If we point out where you are thinking wrong, don't take that as criticism. We were *all* thinking wrong and are only anxious to pass on what we have learned in A. A. We were all so wrong that we had to reverse our thinking, and if we

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Mail Call for All A. A.s in the Armed Forces

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This is a quotation from a personal letter received by the editor of the "Mail Call" page, himself an overseas veteran of World War I. It was written by a fellow A. A., a sergeant who has been, taking part in the recent activities on the unquiet Western front:

"About a year ago you sent me a letter concerning a particular attack you made in the last war, and as I was really in a tight spot recently that description among many other thoughts came to mind. I remember you wrote that with all the artillery, mortars and general hell flying you didn't know how you could survive, but did! That gave me a certain hope and fortified me in my thinking. Prayer for my other buddies was easy and some Power brought me through. Slightly wounded, I am practically well now and will be re-joining my outfit by the time you receive this. Our push looks successful, with plenty of hard fighting ahead."

As this issue of *The Grapevine* deals primarily with the feminine viewpoint on A. A., we ask indulgence for printing the description of the "particular attack" referred to in the sergeant's letter above. The letter-writer was then a young second lieutenant of Infantry and he describes for his father his initiation into the art of war. His alcoholic problem had not developed at that time:

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Somewhere in France.
September 17, 1918

"On the morning of the 12th, I had the greatest experience that comes to any soldier during his service in this war. I went over the top and, incidentally, it was the first time I had ever been under fire. One is, I know, supposed to think of many things during those hours in the trenches before daylight, and perhaps some may pray a bit and make good resolutions provided they come through, but my only sensation, that I can recall, was that I was colder than I had ever been in my life and that anything requiring motion would be a relief. We were in the trenches four hours before zero and during that time a terrific artillery barrage went over from our guns. You would imagine that the noise would be terrible, but it did not seem to worry me, and as Fritz did not reply we were perfectly safe at that time. Fritz, I imagine, thought all Hell was loose and Gott for once far from being with him. At daylight we rushed up a trench into another, parallel to Fritz's line, and over we went. I suppose it is nearly im-

possible to imagine the confusion of an attack—it is barely light enough to see, shells are bursting with a crash and a flash all about, and every now and then an enemy machine gun starts popping. To keep your men together and in place is nearly impossible. I got up with the company ahead before we reached the German line, but when I got there I had the platoon together and in proper place, where I kept most of the men for the remainder of the day. I had men from many another company and regiment with me during the day. In the trench, we found only a few machine gunners, who had caused us to lie flat at times. We passed on through a thick woods and advanced about nine kilometers before the German artillery got our range. Then we caught a little Hell ourselves. I saw a man killed and my runner wounded not ten feet from me—where I had been lying only two seconds before. I hadn't had sense enough to be scared before that, but from then on I didn't enjoy the German artillery. We got out of that spot by advancing, but late that day, or rather all afternoon, while we were dug in at our captured objective, they shelled us with remarkable accuracy. It was unpleasant and unhealthy for more than one. As for

me, I dug with my mess kit and dug fast. An Austrian 88 would make anyone dig fast, and he would not have to be paid 5.00 per day either! I would be interrupted occasionally and flatten out till things quieted a bit.

Next evening we were relieved; now we are well behind the lines. I understand that St. Mihiel on our left was taken and the line is straight. Our casualties and worries all came from artillery. Men of the company say we were very lucky, as the regiment has been up against tougher propositions. Be that as it may, we did what we set out to do and I did not see a single man hesitate to do his part. As for me, another time I will know what everything is like. I am now recognized by the old hands as belonging to the company, having gone under fire with proper behavior—not hard when the rest all do. Really I believe my big Texas runner (not the one who was hit) kept me cool. He wasn't fazed by anything—delivered his messages quickly, and was at other times constantly at my side as a sort of personal bodyguard. Later when we were all cold and hungry and worn out (I slept only three or four hours in about 84) he was always cheerful and joked about things when others grumbled. He too was having his first experience under fire, but little he cared. My sergeant, an old-timer, did his part well. I have looked on dead and wounded now, and I know what a poor devil suffers when he is hit, but I am principally impressed by the fact that with shells falling all around one has miraculous escapes. The Americans do not halt for a shelling—they go through and win.

It is all over for the present for us. We are still a bit tired and very dirty but we are happy. This is certainly a fine outfit—they know they have a good reputation as fighters and they would go anywhere to keep it. The cold has been our greatest enemy, that is at night. I am in A1 shape but unrecognizably dirty. Soon I shall wash. Cooties are not with me as yet. "

Abbot T., New York

NAVY SYMPATHETIC TO A. A.

Capt. Forrest M. Harrison of the U. S. Naval Hospital, Bethesda, Maryland, recently reported to the press that the alcoholic in the Navy gets separate barracks, well equipped with magazines, books and special literature "such as that issued by Alcoholics Anonymous." Meetings are held, and every effort is made to get the men straightened out through education, physical rehabilitation, et cetera.

A Wife Takes Pleasure in A. A.

After almost three, years of sobriety on Frank's part, I find it difficult to believe that he was in such a bad way when he came into A.A. He was simply a wreck mentally, physically, and financially.

I always knew Frank was an alcoholic. The word "alcoholic" in my native French is the "nice" word to describe a drunk. What I did not know was that alcoholism is a disease.

Unlike, many wives of alcoholics, I knew that Frank drank when I married him, but I was young, full of illusions, and I was sure that once married he would learn to drink normally. I was convinced that he lived in a bad environment and that when he was removed from it, everything would be all right. Little did I realize what alcohol would do to Frank and what life would have in store for me, in the 12 years that followed.

I went through the same things all wives of alcoholics go through: anxiety, shame, anger, disgust, fear, hatred, etc. Every woman wants her man to be the best in the world and when he fails her, the disappointment is bitter.

There was nothing wrong with our married life; we had so much in common. We had the same interests; we read, and discussed the books we read together; we talked about everything under the sun by the hour; we never seemed to bore each other; yet drink

marred our happiness. I knew that sooner or later a tragedy would occur.

When, after drinking bouts, Frank slept for hours, I hoped he would die without waking up. To think that one can reach the point of wishing for such a thing to happen to the man she loves is just tragic!

Unlike many other wives, I had nothing to do with Frank's coming into A.A. He wrote to A.A. himself, got in touch with the man he was told to contact, attended a couple of meetings by himself and, from then on, our life took on a different meaning.

I shall never cease to be grateful to A.A. for the, happiness it brought me. My best friends are A.A. friends and they have been a great help in more ways than one. Frank is sober, our life is smooth—we have spats, of course—and we are now out of debt, or pretty near.

Good-bye to the sleepless nights waiting for a taxi to bring Frank home drunk, good-bye to the dreadful quarrels when he came in, good-bye to the "butterflies" that fluttered inside me every night at five o'clock when Frank was leaving the office, good-bye to the fear of going to a party or having one at home,!

We can now face our problems together, we fear nothing, we still enjoy each other's company, but our life revolves very much around A.A. activities. After all, what else counts?
Gisele L., Brooklyn, N.Y.

A DAUGHTER IS PROUD OF HER A. A. MOTHER

I'm proud to say that I am a daughter of a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Indeed, I'm proud to be the daughter of a true alcoholic, for it makes my mother seem like a special kind of person. I cannot say that I have always felt this way. No one could who has grown up with an alcoholic. Certainly A.A. brings a happier life to the family and a wonderful new beginning for the alcoholic. It brings a realization that it wasn't her fault; she didn't do it just to be mean; she had an illness that somehow made her allergic to alcohol. I realize that no matter how perfect the picture is now, there are still hurts and resentment, inside of me, covered over, repressed. All the many years that I was told "Mummy isn't quite herself today, " when I was afraid to bring friends home from school because "Mummy might be that way again today"—these wounds cannot be immediately wiped out just by joining A.A. Naturally.

And I think this is important, for a parent to remember. The alcoholic cannot recall the things she has said and done while drinking, and she often cannot understand why her children don't trust and respect her. It takes a long time to gain back the respect of a child. It will be difficult to wipe out the wounds of these childhood experiences, but they can be wiped out. It took me more than a year before I could live pleasantly with my family again. There was so much resentment and antagonism that I could not understand what A.A. philosophy was or what it meant in my life. It is important for the alcoholic to work slowly toward a new relationship, and not to expect an immediate change in the child's attitude. It is even more important for the child to study the A.A. program. Through this she will realize that her mother was not to blame, and a much richer, fuller relation-

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CREDO FOR AN A.A. WIFE

I believe that my husband has been a sick man and that he is apt to have a relapse at any time unless his "allergy" is kept in check.

I believe that my husband and I need help from a supreme! power in conquering this affliction, and I will not forget to give thanks daily for the help we receive in keeping our feet on the path to this new way of life.

I believe that, except for this new power he has gained, my husband is still the very human man I married and I will not expect him to do a complete about-face of character and personality, giving up all the little minor faults that sometimes annoy me. I will constantly strive to keep my mind on the big fault he is conquering and remember the slogan: First things first.

I believe, however, that he will continue to gain in the acquisition of the positive qualities that make, a pleasing personality: confidence, initiative, generosity, tolerance, etc., and I must never let my acceptance of this fact become humdrum and commonplace, but offer frequent encouragement, stimulation and appreciation to arm him for his daily battle.

I believe, in the light of my newly acquired knowledge, that his affliction is a disease and not simply lack of will power; that I, too, have never been on any pedestal of righteousness (although I admit I have sometimes thought so and acted accordingly).

I also believe that now more than ever I must maintain constant vigil over my habits and interests, taking a personal inventory daily to see where I can improve in order to keep pace with the growth my husband will experience, so that we may be truly partners in this great adventure.

I believe I must thoroughly know and understand all that A.A. stands for; that I must keep abreast with the progress of our own group by reading The Book, *The Grapevine* and other periodicals, as well as the notices on the bulletin board; by attending meetings, aiding in furnishing refreshments, by warmly accepting and welcoming new members, especially by helping the wives and female members to feel at home in the movement and by taking part in the program whenever called on.

I believe that our membership in A.A. is the best thing that ever happened to us. Accordingly, I will not forget to give thanks daily. I will be an active member in every way and I will try to share this joy with others by enlisting their membership and helping them to understand the principles of A.A.

A Grateful A.A. Wife; Montpelier, Vt.

A. A.'s COUNTRY-WIDE NEWS CIRCUIT

It may be that women fear their anonymity will not be respected, and therefore they are more reluctant than men to come into A.A. Society is more scathing in its condemnation of a woman alcoholic. No doubt about that. Nor is there, any doubt that, whatever the reason, there are proportionately few women in A.A. A coast-to-coast review brings out this salient fact: it isn't until about four years after the inception of a group that women begin arriving in any numbers, and even then the process is slow and painful for quite a while.

In a huge impersonal city like New York—which leads the nation in the number of A.A. women— anonymity doesn't play the big bugaboo role that it does in the small towns where usually everybody from the kids on the street corner to the town dowager is either thinking or saying—"My dear, did you see Mrs. Smith today? Disgusting!... "It's just criminal the way she neglects her poor little children!"... "Why, they say she's drunk *all* the time!" And on and on. And yet that same Mrs. Smith is afraid to go to A.A. for fear people might learn she is having difficulty with alcohol!

But it is encouraging to note that everywhere in the country, paralleling the steady increase in general knowledge that alcoholism is a health problem, not a moral one, women from smaller communities as well as large are beginning to come into A.A. a little less spasmodically and haltingly. In these past years, women have been largely responsible for the establishment of groups—to name only a few—in Chicago, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and it was a woman who first brought A.A. to the Pacific Coast, in 1940. Many of our women are in the WACS, WAVES and Nurses Corps, while others are contributing to the war effort by working as Nurse's Aides, director of blood banks, etc.... Enterprising Nancy S., lone A.A. member wintering in Palm Beach, Florida, who ran a bookshop, ordered five copies of the A.A. book, listed them under several headings in her catalogue (Psychiatry, Medicine, Biography, etc.) and put them in a window display under "Health," "How to Relax," and "Be Glad You're Neurotic." They went like hot-cakes. She ordered twenty-five more, hasn't been able to keep up with the demand. Curious fact about the buyers—the books were always for "somebody else."...

Another A.A. woman who had recently moved to Springfield, Missouri, and hadn't yet found a way to start a group, one day read in a Springfield paper a story about Marty Mann and her work with the NCEA (National Committee for Education on Alcoholism). The woman promptly took a P.O. box and wrote a letter to that same paper saying she was an A.A. and would be glad to help anyone interested. Within a week she had nine prospects.

Apropos of Marty, who in private life is an A.A. member and in public life is paid by the NCEA to teach the general public the facts about alcoholism and to try to awaken their interest in doing something about this great public-health problem, we see from many newspaper stories all over the country that, aside from her regular NCEA lectures, she often takes time out from her strenuous work schedule to speak before A.A. groups wherever she may be. The full story of the NCEA and its aims was published in the October, 1944 issue of *The Grapevine*, and the NCEA office at 2 E. 103rd Street, New York, will gladly forward copies of that issue upon request.... Since we're on the subject of women and their work, we must mention, at least in passing, the splendid and consistent work of Bobby B., five years in A.A. Though Bobby works—and how!—here in Manhattan, she is perhaps even better known to the thousands with whom she corresponds all over the country, in her capacity as National Secretary of the Central (A.A.) Office in New York, since 1942. Before that she was secretary of the Manhattan Group, and before that, as Bobby herself puts it, "I was just a drunk."

Station WTIC of Hartford, Connecticut, has been awarded a 1944 "Variety" plaque for "Contributing to the Public Health of the Community." The competition, which was open to all the radio stations in the United States and Canada, was won by WTIC for the *Alcoholics Anonymous* series originated over the station last year. The "Variety" citation reads: "WTIC learned that alcoholism was health problem No 4 and particularly aggravated in wartime. Not a moral depravity but a disease. WTIC decided to awaken and educate its listeners to its causes and cures...." These programs are continuing, and the Hartford Group has notified *The Grapevine* that they have had tremend-

ous response, most of it from women in the interest of husbands and brothers.

Ruth H. T. of Scotia, New York, a volunteer Red Cross worker, was delighted the other day when a returned veteran, "with a drink problem," was sent by the Red Cross to the Scotia A.A. Group. This was the group's first experience with a veteran, and it is Ruth's suggestion that every A.A. group in the nation call on the nearest Red Cross Chapter with some A.A. literature and offer their services....

The House of Representatives recently debated a bill to construct a \$200,000 hospital for alcoholics. "I don't think we should build a mansion for a bunch of drunks," said Rep. Carl Gibson, while Rep. Hugh Caserne commented, "We just sober up our ordinary drunks in three or four days in jail down in Marion County," and Rep. Charlie Higgins reported: "The people who contribute millions in liquor taxes ought to get a little something back."

A.A. has come to Broadway. Leading off with "Alcoholics Anonymous Doing Great Job in Its New Times Sq. Clubhouse," the entertainment world's weekly paper *Variety*, of March 28, says that A.A. pulls no punches, and that "honesty is the quality that stands out among these people.... These are not religious zealots. These are sensible people, men and women of the world for the greater part.... They know the score. They're hep. They don't try to tell you what God to worship, or how—they don't really care whether you worship any.... There isn't anybody sprouting wings around the joint.... The evening spent with A.A. was exhilarating...."

Manhattan and surrounding groups have bought out the 48th Street Theatre for "Harvey" the night of June 15.... A resident of North Little Rock, Arkansas, charged with cashing a Federal check, who was placed on temporary probation, after pleading guilty, was placed on two years probation by Federal Judge Trimble. The defendant joined A.A. in the meantime and the report made on his conduct was favorable. "You come of a good family and you committed this crime of illegally cashing the check while drunk," Judge Trimble admonished the defendant. "In giving you probation I feel that you will take advantage of the advice of these good people who will help you change your entire life for the better."

JACK ALEXANDER...

(Continued from Page 1)

mail was astonishing. Most of it came from desperate drinkers or their wives, or from mothers, fathers or interested friends. The letters were forwarded to the A.A. office in New York and from there were sent on to A. A. groups nearest the writers of the letters. I don't know exactly how many letters came in, all told, but the last time I checked, a year or so ago, it was around 6,000. They still trickle in from time to time, from people who have carried the article in their pockets all this time, or kept it in the bureau drawer under the handkerchief case intending to do something about it.

I guess the letters will keep coming in for years, and I hope they do, because now I know that every one of them springs from a mind, either of an alcoholic or of someone close to him, which is undergoing a type of hell that Dante would have gagged at. And I know, too, that this victim is on the way to recovery, if he really wants to recover. There is something very heartening about this, particularly in a world which has been struggling toward peace for centuries without ever achieving it for very long periods of time.

Jack Alexander

The Saturday Evening Post
Philadelphia, Pa.

ONE WOMAN ALCOHOLIC...

(Continued from Page 4)

point out to you that that is what you must do, it's because we want to help you. Please see that there is nothing personal in it.

Actually, when I talk to you, it is A. A. talk-

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ing—it is what I have learned in A.A. A.A. has taught me that the most important thing in life for me is sobriety. Without it, I am unhappy, confused. Even one drink twists my thinking so that it is no longer straight. That is true of you too—it's true of any alcoholic. Without sobriety, you'll eventually lose your job, husband, and friends. Don't insist that you still have them; you know that eventually you will lose them all. You know that alcoholism is a progressive disease—that you will get worse, not better. You *know* that while you drink, you will not get along with people; you'll be a misfit in this world. Temporarily, you compose better music—so you think—but eventually you'll compose nothing. I know that you know all this because you protest too much.

Sobriety comes *first!* In this you must be unselfishly selfish. By that I mean that by concentrating on yourself now—concentrating on a philosophy of life that will keep you happy and sober—you will be unselfish in the long run. Your sobriety comes before your work, before Johnny even. You must remember that Johnny is not an alcoholic and cannot possibly understand that side of you. If you want to learn how to make ceramics you go to Johnny; when you want to learn to live happily though sober, come to A.A. Some people don't learn in A.A. Some are too sick. You are an intelligent girl, Pola; with just a little application, you'd be a shining light in A.A. I wish you'd try it. We all like you—you'd like us, too—why not give us a real chance. Let me hear from you soon. With love,

Astrid L., New York

A DAUGHTER IS PROUD . . .

(Continued from Page 6)

ship can develop than exists in most families. Many of my school friends have mothers who are very neurotic or very domineering, or live with families where there is some great conflict. I think I am more fortunate than they are, because many of their problems can never be solved. The remarkable thing about the problem of alcoholism in the family is that, when the alcoholic becomes sober permanently, your solution is there—concrete, visible.

As I learned of the basic, humane ideas embodied in the A.A. program, as I saw great changes in my mother, I was able to develop our relationship until today it is a perfection of unity and closeness. I realize now that we were never fighting each other, but struggling together against an unknown enemy. Through this struggle and the camaraderie that comes with licking something together, we are happier than we might have been if this problem

of alcoholism had never entered our lives.

The friends I used to envy—those with an everyday, normal, wholesome life—take their families pretty much for granted. I cannot feel that way because there is something very special and inspiring about our new family relationship. Perhaps it's the kind of feeling parents get when their pilot son has been reported lost at sea, and then a sudden message comes that he has drifted to land and safety. It's the special quality of joy one gets when something very precious has been lost for a long time and suddenly found again.

Pat M., New York

LETTERS TO GRAPEVINE . . .

(Continued from Page 3)

himself to life. His alcoholism is a symptom of his personality disorder. And I don't believe an alcoholic can stop drinking unless he finds a way to solve his personality problem. That's why going on the wagon doesn't solve anything. That's why taking the pledge usually doesn't work. Because that fundamental personality problem is not solved by going on the wagon or by taking the pledge. In A.A., an alcoholic finds a way to solve his personality problem. He does this by recovering three things.

First, he recovers his personal integrity. He pulls himself together. He gets honest with himself and with other people. He faces himself and his problems honestly instead of running away, he takes a personal inventory of himself to see where he really stands. Then he faces the facts instead of making excuses for himself. He recovers his integrity.

Second, he recovers his faith in a Power greater than himself. He admits that he's helpless by himself and he calls on that Higher Power for help. He surrenders his life to God, as he understands Him. He puts his drink problem in God's hands and leaves it there, he recovers his faith.

Third, he recovers his proper relationships with other people. He thinks less about himself and more about others. He tries to help other alcoholics. He makes new friends so that he's no longer lonely. He tries to live a life of service instead of selfishness. All his relationships with other people are improved.

I believe that if an alcoholic wants to stop drinking, he must find a way to solve his personality problem. If he follows the A.A. program, he recovers his personal integrity, his faith, and a way of fellowship and service to others. When his personality problem is solved, his drink problem is solved so long as he never takes that first drink.

Richmond W., Boston, Mass.