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A Miracle at Christmas — a Man Re-born

WOULD you say that a man who had been drinking for months, who had wound up in a flop house in such shape he could not get out of bed and whose "entire frame shook with convulsive-like tremors"—would you say that man could get up the following morning "clear eyed, his complexion good and ... perfectly poised?" Of course not. But that's what happened in Chicago one Christmas five years ago. Following is an account of the strange happening, written by an A.A. member of the Chicago Group.

* * *

The partial history which follows is told by a witness rather than the principal. The latter, during the five years which have ensued since the happenings here described, has shown a reluctance to personally relate the story because he has felt that some of its unusual aspects might be more readily believable were they corroborated. He sits at my side as I dictate, as he has on several past occasions when the story has been told, concerned lest any unexact word creep in. There were, as a matter of fact, two witnesses—One, an editor of a metropolitan paper; and the other, the narrator, a lawyer of long trial experience. The occupations are mentioned not to add anything to the credibility of the witnesses, but to identify the witnesses as men of some sophistication whose powers of observation would not be easily blurred by emotional considerations.

We first met P.C. in a sanitarium in Chicago in August, 1941. P.C. was then about 46 years of age, with a 25-year history of chronic alcoholism. He was a mechanical engineer by profession, nationally known, and distinguished in the field of machine tool designing. By virtue of exceptional ability he had managed to survive

economically, notwithstanding long periods of unemployment by virtue of his alcoholism. Employers in large industry were willing to accept his services even though the tenure was indefinite.

P.C. had been in the sanitarium about 10 days when the newspaperman and myself called to see him. He forestalled our advances by courteously but firmly informing us that he did not feel he could honestly submit to the way of life advised by the program of Alcoholics Anonymous; that the Steps involving a belief in, and a turning of his life and his will to the keeping

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

of a Power greater than himself, made the acceptance of the program prohibitive. He stated that his daily life had caused him to look for answers to those problems in which he was interested within himself; that he had no faith in the supernatural, and that he did not wish to be hypocritical about pretending to accept a program in which he did not believe. He stated further that he had long since abandoned any hope of arresting his addiction; that his history included numerous confinements in sanitariums and hospitals; that after his last treatment at Keeley they had firmly advised him that there was nothing more they could do and that he was refused admission for all future time; that he knew the seriousness of his problem and that early death would be a welcome relief. He was working on some blueprints which he had in his room, resumed his labors and we departed.

Later that evening we were introduced to P.C.'s wife, a very devout woman who was bitterly disappointed at our seeming failure to interest her husband. She stated that she had prayed daily and desperately for a number of years; that she felt his case was entirely beyond the reach of human aid and that if Alcoholics Anonymous could not reach him he was beyond help, but that she had a deep and abiding faith that the God to whom she prayed would, through the medium of Alcoholics Anonymous, cure her husband. We explained to her regretfully that the husband, not she, was the one who must embrace this program and that until such time as he expressed a desire for help there was nothing we could do. We left and the incident was forgotten.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, 1941, while preparing for an exceptionally busy day, I re-

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EDITORIAL:

On the 2nd Step

"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

The most interesting characteristic of this Step is its effect on new persons in A.A. Some newcomers, perhaps most, already have accepted the doctrine that there is a Power greater than themselves. Others, more cynical, have difficulty believing that there is *anything* real unless it is another person or thing. "Some do and some don't; others will and others won't" as the old couplet goes.

And yet, the 2nd Step is the very heart of the A.A. Program. Without it, the most carefully planned approach to the problem of alcoholism fails; without it, the most stubborn and determined fall. Unless there is acceptance of a Power greater than ourselves, the other steps become meaningless. They become men on a team that is without spirit; they become form without substance.

There are many things in our lives that we *cannot* change. Some of these things, or our inability to change them, may be the underlying causes of our alcoholism. They may be the things that we are trying to escape through alcohol. When we become sober and start out on the A.A. Program, these things remain with us. Of ourselves, we can do nothing about them. They are insurmountable. It is at this point in our lives that we draw strength from this Power that is greater than ourselves. Having turned these things over to it, they need no longer concern us. At long last they reveal themselves in their true perspective.

On the other hand, there are many things in our lives that we *can* change. Some of these things, or our failure to change them, may be the underlying causes of our alcoholism. Usually, we have lacked the courage to change these things. We have been unable to summon the courage. Immature and emotionally unstable, we have evaded reality by escape through alcohol.

When we accept the fact that there is a Power greater than ourselves, it is not too difficult to call on this Power for the courage and wisdom necessary to face even a bleak reality. In other words, we have found an understanding and helpful friend who cannot fail us. We are relieved because we know that we are no longer alone.

Many newcomers to A.A. are troubled with what they call the "spiritual" part of the Program. They rebel at the thought that any part of A.A. is "religious"; that they must be "saved" in order to recover. This point of view is not only understandable but natural to a certain extent. The disease of alcoholism is a serious illness. Its victims have suffered. They have been either beaten or disillusioned and, if they have progressed far along the road of alcoholism, they have seen the failure of the purely "religious" approach. Indeed, they may have tried it—without success. They have become cynical and have retreated into themselves.

Let us give a word of hope to these cynical newcomers to the Program. Look around you. There are more than 40,000 persons in the world today who have recovered from this illness. Many of them, too, had trouble with the 2nd Step. Many, like you, were cynical. But they *continued to try to believe* and they *kept an open mind!* Today, they are well. If they remain on the Program, they will keep well.

There is no set pattern for realizing the 2nd Step. Many attain belief suddenly; others, more slowly. The "bright, shining light of understanding" does not come to all at once. Acceptance of this Step comes to many men in many ways. You will get it eventually. When you do, you will understand when an A.A. says to you: "Gee, this thing isn't so tough after all. I don't seem to want to drink anymore!"—*J.T., Greenwich Village, N. Y.*

What Is Our A.A. Grapevine

By Bill

Hundreds of A.A.s have not yet seen or heard of *The A.A. Grapevine*. Others query, who is it? What is it? What are its ideals? So I have been asked to explain.

The A.A. Grapevine is our principal monthly journal. It is devoted to the interests of Alcoholics Anonymous—and to nothing else. It tries to publish the news and portray the views of A.A.s everywhere. It aims to reflect a cross section of our thought and action. Already reaching all parts of America, it is beginning to be read in foreign lands. Some of its 5,600 subscribers are non-alcoholics vitally interested in our progress and philosophy.

In short, *The A.A. Grapevine* is rapidly becoming "the collective voice of Alcoholics Anonymous." Like everything else that is good *The A.A. Grapevine* has been an evolution—not a promotion. Like Topsy "it just grew." Now let me cut back into our past to let you see more of why and how *The A.A. Grapevine* came to be.

Ten years ago our fellowship was a weak and wobbly infant—just a few alcoholics clinging desperately to an ideal, and to each other. These early ones were the originators of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. As our numbers swelled the newer members naturally looked to the older ones for help and example. They began to call us older ones "leaders," and in the case of Dr. Bob and myself they coined for each of us the rather resounding title of "founder." Since A.A. really had a score of "founders" he and I really wish that hadn't occurred. But it did. Simply, we suppose, because we were the first in point of time and were therefore of the longest experience.

Thus it happened that we came to have, in the minds of our fellow A.A.s, a rather unique status. Never official, always informal, yet there it was. In matters of principle or policy A.A.s began to regard Bob and me as representing their collective conscience; they also began to think of us as a sort of heart to the movement which took in the constant stream of incoming problems and perplexities and then pumped out answers. Then as we went about among the growing groups, he and I were asked to stand on platforms and expound A.A. to ever larger audiences. So it was that we became the collective "voice of A.A." As a friend put it, "That was a whale of a big order!"

Bob and I agree with him. It's too big an assignment for any two alcoholics. We're too

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VINO VIGNETTE: So I Sold Myself, Too!

The age of miracles isn't past. I'll never forget the first time I saw the A.A. program work.

I wasn't in the mood for a miracle or much else. I sat at my editor's desk on a small town paper and worried over the past year with its succession of cures, treatments and hospitals. A few weeks before I had met the A.A.s trying to form a group in a nearby town.

The program looked pretty flimsy to my doubting mind. I had said so rather plainly at the meeting when an attempt was made by A.A.'s co-founders to get a group going. Medicine and science were the ticket and I'd tried them both. In fact during the past year I had gotten to feel lonely if an attendant didn't keep on my heels and sort of lost if there weren't bars on the window.

Tentatively I'd said I'd try the program before having myself committed to the state home where I wouldn't have to drink and wouldn't worry anyone. With desperate need I had muttered, "Deliver me from evil," as I double-timed it past my usual drinking places. Told to pray for 24 hours' strength in the mornings I could only think of an old fraternity prayer that began "Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings"—it seemed to fit and I'd been a pretty decent young man then.

Now after only a few weeks I was asked to go out after one of my acquaintances, a business man with whom my paper did business. The boys had picked me a good one. Not only had I drunk with him but I knew, or thought I knew, his temperament. Through an unexpected death

my prospect had stepped into a good car dealership bill was rapidly wrecking the chance of a lifetime. He thought he couldn't sell a car unless he had a drink to give zip to his sales talk or bought the customer a few to soften him up. His foreman had complained to me about his way with the employees. He didn't have any use for a party at which the host didn't set out the bottles and really let the guests get into them.

Grimly, uncertainly, unconvinced myself, I dragged up the street. If I was grim, he was grimmer. He was sober, by request of the distributor who'd given him a final warning, and his banker, who was about to call his notes.

I didn't know what to say. I don't know what I said. He had his little son with him and had promised to take him Christmas shopping. He made an excuse and started outside with the boy. I tagged along, shuffling through the snow. He wanted to get away from me. I wanted to turn tail and call it a failure.

Lenny didn't say much. Finally I invited him to a bridge party at my home with the other beginners of our new group. His wife was happy, everyone else was happy, but Lenny didn't seem to enjoy the cokes and jokes.

Typical Die-hards

A few nights later we look him, inaudibly but visibly protesting, to a meeting. he said he wasn't an alcoholic. It grew into the same struggle every time to get him there. I continued with my doubts and my routine. Both of us sat through the meetings wondering what the others had.

But Christmas is a good time for a miracle and it came. After many weeks Lenny's usually sour face relaxed and he said at a meeting, "By Gad, I AM an alcoholic."

No one would have known him after that. He was smiling, pleasant, happy, won a bonus from his distributor, paid off the bank — and his foreman came to thank me, the accidental conveyor of the program.

I looked at the miracle of Lenny at every meeting and nearly every day as we met on the street. And then I knew that it was a double miracle, that in spite of my doubts and hesitations, the Power and the program had come through for both of us. The feeling that I had touched something of the spirit which changed this man finished my own job.

That was over six years ago, but I still feel the warmth around my heart when I think of his changed face. And I like to add the happy ending that when war cut his business down Lenny held together through the crisis, got a good job as superintendent of a factory and promptly got a group going in his new home town.

Miracles do happen. — J.R.H., *Manhattan*

Are A.A. Women and Wives Sometimes Smug?

In a sparsely occupied dining car rolling through Dixie, I couldn't help but overhear the conversation at a nearby table between a man and an attractive woman. She was suggesting A.A. for his wife, and praising its works quite audibly, though she herself was downing a highball. Because I am the wife of an A.A., myself and not an alcoholic, I guessed she was too. Then I heard her explain that she herself had a drinking problem which she hadn't been able to lick, and that, coming, after her espousal of A.A., made me wonder why she had missed connections with it.

When the man left, I joined her, and we continued the conversation. She went on to tell me that she lived in a medium-sized southern city which has two A.A. groups, had attended meetings for many months and had seriously endeavored to stay on the program. What drove her out, or rather back? The other women!

True, I didn't know her personally. She was good to look at, well dressed, well mannered, and well spoken. She told me she had a husband who had never failed to stand by her, and a grown son. Nothing outwardly objectionable; in fact extremely personable and pleasant.

What then had happened between her and the women already safely within The A.A. haven in that town? It interested me because a few days before I had read G.O.'s piece in *The October A.A. Grapevine* on the special problems of women.

This story I heard made every word of that article come to life. The city, it seemed, boasted only a handful of women A.A.s, and this newcomer found them closely knit and jealous of their prerogatives as the few female lights in an otherwise male assemblage. The wives of male members she described as nice but noticeably condescending to any new women who entered

the group. She complained that her own home, her own social set was as good as any of those she saw on A.A. visits, and yet the wives of members always treated her as though she were an upstart and they let her know by word and expression that if it weren't for A.A. they wouldn't tolerate her.

As I explained, I'm a wife myself, and probably guilty of many of the offenses against new girls and women which warp their first impressions of all A.A. women. And we wives, while also having personality and character-development problems of our own to cope with, can nonetheless lick them more easily than the alcoholics if we realize that they are potentially as damaging as theirs, and apply the program to our own activities and thinking.

I can't speak for women alcoholics, but I do think that the wives of A.A.s should always be on hand to help welcome, and really welcome, any women who wish to avail themselves of this way of life. What if they do attend closed meetings where we aren't present? Aren't they working on the same problems as our husbands? And wouldn't they be far less fearsome women if they were our good friends?

Friendship within her own sex is as important to a woman as are the bonds between men, and that goes for us wives as well as for alcoholic women. We can help each other by keeping our minds open and our hearts open and our eyes open to ways in which to make any newcomers feel at home in our homes.

I hope every woman, in or on the fringes of A.A., has read and taken to heart that article about women — and particularly those in smaller towns where fewer people have more influence. A.A. is much too precious to save for just a few. —K.T., *New York*.

The Story of a Miracle at Christmas

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received a telephone call at my home from Mrs. P.C. She stated that her husband had been away on a drunk for about three weeks, that she had come to Chicago searching for him, and had located him in a cheap stag hotel in the "flop-house" district on North Clark Street, that she had not seen him but was informed he was in desperate physical condition. She begged that I, as a representative of Alcoholics Anonymous, call to see him immediately. I informed her that, regrettable as the situation was, there was nothing Alcoholics Anonymous could do about it but that medical treatment appeared to be indicated. She spurned the suggestion of medical attention and stated that she had been informed that among his effects in this room were some scribbles on a piece of paper containing the name of the newspaperman who had seen him on the prior occasion in August and that she was certain her husband was urgently seeking to reestablish his contact with A.A.

Begrudgingly I consented to call and late that afternoon met Mrs. P.C., surrounded by broken-down panhandlers and bums, in the small, unfurnished room that served as a second-floor lobby of the shoddy dwelling. So firm was her conviction that only members of Alcoholics Anonymous could help that she had waited all day in this dingy back-room and had not gone in to see her husband. The proprietor of the house gruffly requested the caller to get P.C. out of there. The proprietor stated that someone had surreptitiously brought P.C. into the place some three or four days before, that he was extremely drunk at that time and had remained so; that he was confined to bed a large portion of the time and suggested he be removed to County Hospital. The proprietor stated that he had given P.C. some whiskey during the first couple of days but that he had no more money and nothing had been given him on that day.

I then went up to see P.C. and the picture of that room is as vivid now as it was upon the occasion five years before. It was uncarpeted, most of the wallpaper had fallen away from the crumbling plaster, and it was dimly lighted by a small incandescent bulb strung by wire from the ceiling. There was a wash stand in the corner, one dilapidated straight-back chair, and a large brass bed upon which were strewn a few shreds of soiled bed-clothing. In the middle of the bed lay P.C. I would not have recognized him as the man I had interviewed some four months before were I unaware of whom to expect. He was thin, emaciated, with a number of days' growth of beard. His eyes were blood-shot and his entire frame shook with convulsive-like tremors. He attempted to speak when I came into the room,

and afterwards told me he recognized me, although I was unable to understand a single coherent word during the interval that I remained there. He was apparently unable to walk and I remember distinctly that he agonizingly placed his head between two rungs of the brass bed in order that he might control the tremors that shook the upper part of his body in the hope of making himself understood.

A rather significant thing occurred then, although P.C. and I disagree as to the manner of the occurrence. He says that he apologized to me for the squalor and filth of the room in which I found him and that I replied: "You need not apologize, for on a night of which this is the anniversary the newly born Christ was found in a stable." I insist that I did not hear any apology from P.C. and that I made no such utterance. However, the occurrence is significant in that P.C. heard, or thought he heard, such a statement and was profoundly impressed.

I bought a bottle of whiskey, gave him a portion of it and left the remainder. It was Christmas Eve and I was anxious to get home to a large family of small children and, with scant and hurried instructions to his wife about the procedure in the event of hospitalization, took my departure.

The day after Christmas I did not see P.C. but, on the following day, in answer to an earnest request from his wife, accompanied by the newspaperman, went to the place where he had been taken. To my amazement our knock at the door was answered by P.C.! He was clean shaven, clear eyed, his complexion good and, above all, he was perfectly poised. He said: "Are you surprised to see me in this condition?" My amazement was apparent. He said: "Something very strange has happened to me. I have been most anxious to see you for the past two days because I feel that only a member of your organization would understand the thing that has come into my life. To go back to Christmas Eve — after you left me" (I was surprised to know that he was aware of my having been there) "I drank the remainder of that bottle and dozed off. I don't know what time it was when I next became conscious but it was dark. From then on the entire night seems to have been one without beginning or end. But, when I awakened I was assailed with one overwhelming question: Why am I alive?"

"By way of explanation, let me say that for a long time I had not wanted to live and during the past few years had tried on three separate occasions to commit suicide. Each time my plan seemed to have been interfered with by some

unusual chain of circumstances. But, as I have said, this question 'Why am I alive?' kept pounding in my brain as I lay there. I felt I must have an answer, so arising from my bed I repeated aloud the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm, both of which I had learned as a boy from a religious mother, neither of which I had had occasion to refer to since that time, at the same time asking God for an answer to the question. Then it became daylight and I remember my wife being in the room, and suddenly the realization came to me that I was no longer ill. Although I had been drinking for months and excessively for three long weeks, at that moment on that Christmas morning I felt not the slightest physical infirmity. *I was well.* I had no hangover, no remorse, no tremors, no nausea, no nervousness — I felt hungry and later in the morning relished a hearty breakfast. Me, who on other occasions suffered acutely from depression and nerves after even a weekend drunk. My mind functioned normally; I remembered things that I had not thought of in months: business matters to be attended to, appointments which I must make and fill. For many months my automobile had been in storage as I dared not drive it, and for the first time I felt perfectly confident to drive a car and determined that I should reclaim it without delay. My emotions were normal, my sense of responsibility acute, and in every respect I felt as a healthy man would feel who had lived normally for a long period of time. I am sorry that you did not see me yesterday because I was then exactly in the same condition as I am now and as I was when I awakened on Christmas morning.

"During these past days I have had no desire to drink. I am contented as I have not been in 25 years. I am willing now and anxious to know more about this Power upon whom you alcoholics lean."

We explained to P.C. that contrary to his impression such experiences as his were not common in A.A. and that we were in no better position to explain it than he. We told him that most of us had acquired our sobriety the hard way, 24 hours at a time — hard agonizing hours in the beginning; that there must be a reason for his experience that only time will make clear.

These things which I relate happened five years ago. Since that Christmas morning P.C. has been a constant attendant at group activities and no man in our group has been more quietly active in 12th Step work. He has had no difficulty with the old problem and his days are calm and peaceful. Each man who reads this story with interest will have his own explanation, but all will agree that whatever it was, five years' sobriety attest it was something deeper than a dramatic emotional experience. Some may conclude that an answer as satisfactory as any is to be found in the grateful wife's statement:—"The Lord selected his own birthday to answer my prayers."

SAINTS ARE FEW AMONG MEN, TOO

From Greenwich Village, N. Y.

"I wouldn't want you to breath this to a soul . . . but . . . I just heard . . ."

The subject of gossip is singled out from the October issue's "what's-wrong-with-women" article because it seems potentially the most damaging of any of the other personality deficiencies which were enumerated so courageously by a member of the female contingent. But, in passing, the male sex should at least attempt to be as gallant and admit that perhaps most of the same constructive self-criticism would be healthy for us, too.

Practically all of the 11 points listed in that article could be fitted to our shape and size without too many alterations. With a doff of the hat and a very low bow, we must confess to the ladies — shouldn't we? — that we also form too intense attachments; like to be bossy; like to gossip; demand attention and are "hurt-ed," as the little boy says, when we don't get it; and frequently think more often in personal terms than in the abstract.

As to wolves prowling about! Could be that just a few wear trousers. And as to "vanity and dread of age," is there a man at 40 and up who isn't worrying about losing his goldilocks, if he has any left to worry about? Or his paunch or third chin?

The fact is that if any of the ladies are on the griddle, we should arise as one gentleman and politely ask if there's any room left for us. But there's hope for all and after downing a stiff dose of self-appraisal, which is better than penicillin though harder to take, let's consider what that hope is.

First, the looking glass. On the boys' side of the house it doesn't take too much hunting to find the fellow who likes to answer all of the questions and monopolize the floor at every group discussion. In fact, you can't miss him. Next to him sits the prophet of gloom. He thinks everyone except him is about to have a slip, and he says so freely. Somewhere around, for certain, is the reformed drunk traveling under the guise of A.A. He's stopped drinking, but never grown beyond that point and looks down his nose at practically everything and everyone, particularly anyone who's still having trouble.

You'll find, too, over on the boys' side, the zealot who has suddenly discovered religion and is intent on educating everyone else including the many who've known about God for quite a spell. One of the nicest characters of all is the wolf, usually middle-aged and frayed at the edges, who hides his amorous fangs beneath a

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The Pleasures of Reading

Men Who Have Walked With God

by Sheldon Cheney (Alfred A. Knopf, \$3)

Absorption in the necessities of physical living, the pleasures of the senses and the recreation of the intellect has too often precluded that exploration of the realm of the spirit without which the human soul cannot be rendered content and invulnerable and a "way" found leading to union with the Higher Power and a life transcending material significance. But, notwithstanding man's pre-occupation with worldly affairs and perhaps because of the very fact that such concentration has produced war or human infamy or personal disaster, his basic faith in the orderly processes and the spiritual importance of the universe has been unshaken. Indeed, the aspiration and yearning, unexpressed and inexpressible, of all conditions of men for illumination on matters whereon abstract reason sheds no light and pure intellect throws no radiance have been an inseparable part of the human personality in all times — however much the world has been mired in moral degradation or the individual sunk in a spiritual slough.

In an age of rationalism the lag between the frontiers of science and the vanguard of spiritual development has been duly noted by the political and even the military leaders and rulers of the world and universal destruction is freely prophesied unless the threat of annihilating physical force is met and overcome by a resurgence of moral power. Likewise in our personal lives many of us have narrowly averted catastrophic disaster only by permitting the infusion in our veins of a life-saving stream of spiritual plasma, or, as William James put it, by opening ourselves to the influence of God so that spiritual energy may flow therein and our deepest destiny be fulfilled. This process we have commonly called a spiritual experience and it is not without significance that there is a spiritual philosophy at the core of religions, or ways of life, as different as Christianity, Buddhism, Neo-Platonism and Taoism, and this is so whether the professors of these faiths or systems make an abstraction of the Higher Power or speak of God in a more personalized sense. This is more commonly called a mystic philosophy by scholars who write on the subject, what we know as a spiritual experience is frequently mentioned as a mystic experience and those seers and saints who have attained the closest "realization of the Eternal" are frequently referred to as mystics. Because the word "mysticism" is often employed wrongly or ignorantly, and the philosophy itself has been assailed as a nebulous thing compounded of darkness and confusion, its use is sometimes unfortunate, although virtually unavoidable in any thorough discussion of the subject. So Sheldon Cheney's account of men who have walked with God is "the Story of Mysticism Through the Ages Told in the Biographies of Representative Seers and Saints with Excerpts from their Writings and Sayings."

Without attempting to define the infinite it can fairly be said in the words of Edward Carpenter (and many of us can vouch for it), that the result of a mystic or spiritual experience in any man is "a sense of absolute repose, a consciousness of immense and universal power, such as completely transforms the world for him . . . All life is changed." He adds: "For the ceaseless endeavor to realize this identity with the great Self, there is no substitute. No teaching, no theorizing, no philosophizing, no rules of conduct or life will take the place of actual experience." The difficulties of the undertaking notwithstanding, it was a happy thought of Mr. Cheney's to write this work about spiritual prophets, artists and poets who have been close to God in their several and special experiential ways. The stories of these men and women written against an historical background and threaded together on a spindle of editorial exposition and discussion serve to inspire and to guide in a practical way the seeker, of the greatest good who may emulate if not equal such notable personages in their striving for spiritual stature. Of the shining examples therein set forth, some were learned and some were ignorant; some were renowned and some were obscure; but all were noble and all were humble.

The first of these to be discussed is Lao-Tse who lived in the sixth century B.C., and embodied his philosophy, personal and mystic, in poetry. Taoism is a religion, a "way of life," and, taking its dominant characteristic from its poetic founder, is predicated naturally enough on the inherent rhythm and orderliness of the universe with which individuals and nations alike must establish some sort of concordance if they are to attain serenity and peace. "Easy does it!" was the seer's admonition to both the common man and to rulers. In times much like our own, it was necessary to remind men that they cannot live by desires, sense-satisfaction and material possessions alone, nor get along solely by the exercise of knowledge and reason. Nothing short of widespread personal regeneration could save the world then, as now, because peace and an ordered life depend upon change in the life-ideals of the individuals making up a social community. The Christian ideal is foreshadowed in one of the poems which includes the line: "Repay injury with kindness." The precise technique of con-

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Men Who Have Walked With God

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temptation of this mystic is not entirely clear, but the author avers that it involves "liberation from the false activity, the material enterprise, and the law-regulated morality that 'knowledge' and pragmatic education have brought into human life."

About the same time the Buddha was teaching in India, as one of "an unending line of seers . . . who have celebrated as the highest and holiest aim of life the attainment of divine consciousness or enlightenment." Again, in the attainment of this aim, the function of intellect, reason and learning is minimized when the prophet says: "Learning is a good thing, but in the end it availelh not. Experience, not learning, leads to wisdom and the bliss of immortality." A Christian philosophy emerges in such sayings as "Hatred can be overcome only by non-hatred" and "If a man shall do me wrong, I will offer in return my full love; the greater the injury he attempts, the greater must be the good I offer in return." When asked how he came to have such calm and contentment, who was his master and what his faith, the answer was: "I have no master, and my faith is of the simplest. Those who harbor no ill will, who have restrained the senses and freed themselves of desire, those who have escaped selfishness, they open the way to immortality."

In a chapter devoted to the Age of Reason in Greece, we are reminded what heroic deeds were accomplished in the realm of the mind and how the descent of the Greeks to self-destruction was swift and unequivocal. The reader may decide for himself whether this was because the Greeks had no religion, or, more accurately, no common spiritual faith. Of greater interest to us is it that Pythagoras, like many modern mathematicians and cosmic scientists, was a mystic, and he coined the word *philosophia*. *Sophia* means wisdom (not knowledge) and "friends of wisdom" was the name used by Pythagoras and his associated spiritual speakers. Of more lasting significance too, is the fact that Plato was one of the prophets of a universal spiritual faith. Notable as they are for lucidity and as examples of pure rationalism, Plato's famous dialogues are replete with poetic or imaginative interpolations in which the writer escapes the limitations of argument and demonstration. As Mr. Cheney says (and this is one of the things he seeks to prove by his book), "All that belongs in life to a man's faith, vision, and spiritual aspiration finds expression outside the routine of chain reasoning; and so (Plato) suddenly bolts the logical discourse, abandons dialectic for creative picturing."

Many other individuals whose characters are universal and whose lives are epochal, are described, including Plotinus, Saint Bernard, Saint Francis, Fra Angelico, the saintly painter, William Blake, poet, painter and "a mystic in the Age of Enlightened Skepticism" and other men and women whose names are more familiar than their achievements. There is also a trio whose names are not so well known but whose influence has been persistent and pervasive through the years. The story of their lives is of contemporary interest and value. They are a little easier for us to understand, if not to follow, because while they are notably of the "quietest" school, their faith as reflected in "good works," service and activity is more comprehensible to and adoptable by a restless people. One of these was Brother Lawrence, an uneducated lay monk of the seventeenth century, who, in a curiously modern empirical way, daily "practiced the presence" of God, and who said before he died: "If in this life we would know the serene peace of paradise, we must school ourselves in familiar, humble and loving converse with God."

Another was Jacob Boehme, an unlettered Lutheran shoemaker, who was born in 1575. His circumstances were poor, his life full of strife and persecution, and in his faith were a childlike directness and trust. He achieved illumination and wrote books, as he said, "neither out of book-learning nor from other men's opinion or their science, but out of a book opened within myself, as a reflection from God." Accurately or not, Boehme has been called "the Apostle of the Quakers," and the Quaker colonies of America were founded upon substantially Bohemian principles. As the author states, this experiment in government failed "only after achieving one of the most heartening records of fraternal progress in recent history." The third of this group was Meister Eckhardt, an ecclesiastic of the fourteenth century who died in the shadow of a heresy charge, the basic facts of whose life were discovered only by the scholarship of the nineteenth century. Known as the father of German theology and sometimes of German philosophy, he seems to have been "an unexampled combination of scholar and intuitive, traditional wisdom and personal experience." It is the latter aspect in which we are most interested and we find agreement with his declarations that "He is blessed who shares himself usefully" and "In this life no man reaches the point at which he can be excused from practical service," as well as with the qualification that "active life is to alternate with contemplation." Eckhardt, for all his theological erudition, discounts, as do so many spiritual leaders, learning and reason as against intuition and direct experience.—R.F.S., *Montclair, N. J.*

Our A.A. Grapevine

(Continued from Page 2)

fallible. And were we infallible we couldn't last forever anyhow. Hence he and I have been, for a long time now, in process of passing these functions of conscience, heart and voice over to others.

Years ago we helped set up The Alcoholic Foundation whose trustees became guardians of your general A.A. funds, and who of late, by custom and general consent, are more and more regarded as the custodians of A.A. tradition and general policy. The trustees are no body of authority. They simply act as sort of general service committee to all A.A. Primarily they are custodians and mediators. As such, they are beginning to be seen by the groups as representing our collective A.A. conscience. Bob and I hope that trend will continue. This seems likely as the trustees and their duties are becoming better understood.

A year after the creation of The Alcoholic Foundation, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was published in April, 1939. This too was the enterprise of a group of A.A. members who thought our experience ought to be codified and set on paper. This group supplied funds, suggestions and stories. Bob and I were given the task of deciding what, should go into the book and I was assigned the writing of its text. The publication of the A.A. book marked the point in our history where our early members, along with Bob and myself, transferred our experience through this new medium to an ever wider circle which now promises to be the wide world of alcoholism.

The A.A. Central Office at New York came into being simultaneously with the book. Here our secretaries nowadays answer thousands of inquiries, look after our over-all public relations, write letters of encouragement to new and isolated groups, see to the printing and distribution of group lists, pamphlets, literature and the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Several years ago the trustees of our Foundation acquired full ownership of the A.A. book and at the same time assumed a custodial oversight of The Central Office whose financial support has gradually been taken over by the groups through their voluntary contributions to The Foundation. Thousands of new members have found their way to A.A., hundreds of groups have been helped with their growing pains, and millions of people have heard of A.A. through the functioning of The Central Office. Little by little, our Central Office is becoming recognized as the heart of A.A. It receives inquiries and problems, then pumps out information and the best answers it can. Thus one more function of the originators of A.A. is in process of transfer to the Central Office staff. The Central Office has almost become the central heart of A.A.

"Now," you say, "what has all this got to do with *The A.A. Grapevine*?" Just this: Like the

earlier groups which assembled the Foundation, the A.A. book and the Central Office, *The A.A. Grapevine* began two years ago among several newspaper-minded A.A.s who thought we needed a monthly periodical. They were willing to contribute a little money and boundless effort to make it a success. At the beginning, this group of A.A.s had no special authorization from anyone. They merely look off their coats and did a job, a job so well done that at the end of a year they found their paper in national distribution. There was no sponsoring, no promoting. Like the A.A. book, the Central Office, and the Foundation, *The A.A. Grapevine* became a national institution on its own effort and merit.

Arrived at this point members of the staff came to the trustees to discuss the future of the publication. They also asked me to write some pieces and requested me to ascertain if the groups would like to have this periodical as their principal A.A. publication. Hundreds of groups and individual subscribers came back with an enthusiastic "YES." There was scarce a single dissent. Accordingly, *The A.A. Grapevine*, was incorporated, its beneficial ownership transferred to the Foundation and it is now being managed by a joint committee composed of two trustees of the Foundation, two members of the volunteer staff and its editor. Not quite self-supporting yet, we hope it will presently become so. Consequently we are witnessing still another transference. *The A.A. Grapevine* is becoming the voice of Alcoholics Anonymous.

As one of the staff members recently put it, "We think that *The A.A. Grapevine* ought to become the 'voice of Alcoholics Anonymous, 'bringing us news of each other across great distances, and always describing what can be freshly seen in that vast and lifegiving pool we call 'A.A. experience.' Never taking part in the controversial issues of religion, reform or politics, never seeking profit, never lending itself to commerce or propaganda, always mindful of our sole aim to carry the A.A. message to those who suffer alcoholism — such is our ideal for *The A.A. Grapevine*."

With these sentiments Dr. Bob and I heartily concur. We hope that A.A.s everywhere will feel it to be their newspaper; that our able A.A. writers will contribute freely; that all groups will send in news of their doings which may be of general interest; that *The A.A. Grapevine* will presently take its place in the minds of all A.A.s as one of our essential central services close alongside the Foundation, the A.A. book and the Central Office.

You see, dear fellow members, Dr. Bob and I have a slightly ulterior motive! For, when the transfer of our original functions of conscience, heart and voice is made complete to these newer, better and more permanent agencies, then we old-timers can really take a walk!



"He says it's a part of Gracious Living"

The Pleasures of Reading

Breakdown by Louis Paul
(Crown Publishing Co., \$2.75)

This is the story of Ellen Croy, smart young New Yorker with everything most women crave. She has a good job on a newspaper, a loving husband, a beautiful child and a charming home, yet she is an alcoholic. Why?

For years she had drunk socially with no more disastrous results than hangovers, but after a publisher's cocktail party she experiences a mental blank of two hours which is tangled up with an image of a man in a gray topcoat pawing her in a taxi. She wakes up in her mother's home. Mama has called the doctor who gives her sedatives and some advice, but later, home in her own bed, to quote Mr. Paul: "Ellen supposed she had done the whole thing rather well. She'd been rational in conversation, rational after that spell of hysteria on Mama's couch. All the conditioned reflexes had operated automatically, preserving with John a nice air of casualness. But within, where no one could look, the hysteria still seethed."

The author trails Ellen through an alcoholic maze, one blind alley ending in a doctor who doped her liquor, another in a drunken buying spree and the last, a befogged trip to Bellevue in a masterly piece of work.

His skill in making the woman alcoholic's mind seem to function in a logical manner is uncanny. Ellen's fear-ridden mind, her lack of any conscious reason for her behavior and her rationalizing are stark realism. There is not a false word in the book.

His sympathetic understanding of A.A. is apparent. He uses Bill, Ellen's boss, a "ten-months" man to aid her in her upward struggles. He takes her to the Clubhouse, where she hears a speech by an A.A., which for clarity of purpose and beauty of words is not surpassed by anything which has come to this reader's attention.

For the woman alcoholic, particularly, it strikes home again and again. How a man could have written this story is beyond my woman's mind to conceive, but Mr. Paul did, and to him go my praises for his brilliant illumination of the subject of alcoholism.—H.A.D., *Manhattan*

Saints Are Few Among Men., Too

(Continued from page. 5)

cloak of phony 12th Step stuff. Compared to him a church box thief is an upright citizen. And then there's the busybody who's so intent on straightening out everyone else's personality that his own never gets attention; and also the ego-maniac who thinks everyone is just dying to hear, for the umpteenth time, how he used to drink three quarts a day; and the braying donkey who goes around publicly megaphoning the names of all of the A.A.s he knows.

These are a few of the more distinct types and there are varying blends of all. In fact, very few of us can really claim a pure strain completely untainted by any personality poisons. Can we?

Not all of the gossip that one bears, if he wants to listen, is pitched in contralto or soprano whispers. You also can catch a tenor or deep bass note quite frequently.

In fact, the anvil chorus might be found to be pretty evenly divided between male and female voices with just about as much disharmony and off-key notes coming from one as the other.

In some respects, the male gossip is likely to be more discordant than the female, or at least he sounds so. Perhaps this is due to the ancient myth that the male is the stronger sex and as the stronger is presumed to be less prone to pettiness. Perhaps it may be suggested that this is indeed as much an hallucination as ever encountered on a dreary morning-after. But, like so many other superstitions, it dies hard and because gossip seems so out of place in big, strong circles, the male gossip does seem a little worse than the female species.

Observation of this particular weakness of the human flesh, male or female, leads one to the discovery that gossip arises directly and unmistakably from a feeling of inferiority. The gossip actually feels inferior either to the person he's gossiping about or to people in general. The psychologists have undoubtedly known this fact a long time, but it's good to discover it for oneself, for both its comfort and its curative effects.

After one has learned this particular truth he will realize that it is a sign of weakness in himself and that others will recognize it as such in him.

The whisper monger is working the old fallacy of trying to elevate himself by tearing down someone else; or of trying to pull others down to his level because he can't rise to theirs.

The male gossip is actually apt to be more vicious with his "did you hear" than the female species. The latter often is content with a verbal attack on another's hat where the male frequently takes up someone's character for ghoulish dissection.

The male tends to do much of his gossiping in the form of boasting, and when a man starts boasting he leaves no doubt as to why Paul Bunyon was a male. His tongue works like a drink and one word leads to 40 too many. And it's a well known fact that the three subjects on which men reach their greatest excesses of boasting are liquor, women and fishing. The only appreciable difference in the kind of verbal intoxication these three subjects seem to bring on is that when it's fishing, he's boasting about the one that got away.

Unfortunately even though the gossip is secretly despised his tongue can cause a great deal of unhappiness, especially when he is the type who likes to deal in reputations usually because his own has so many spots. People do listen and pass the muck along.

Whether the dealer in dirt is male or female

1,700 A.A.s and Friends Attend Annual Dinner

More than 1,700 members of Alcoholics Anonymous and their friends—representing A.A. Groups from all sections of the United States—attended the organization's 11th annual dinner on November 7, at the Hotel Commodore, New York. The dinner was sponsored by the New York Intergroup Association of A.A.

Bill W., one of the two co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, delivered the principal A.A. address at the dinner. He reviewed A.A.'s tremendous growth in the past few years and predicted its future. "If we remember that our first duty is face-to-face help for the alcoholic who still suffers from his illness, we need not worry about our future," he said.

Drawing a contrast between A.A. of today and a similar organization, The Washingtonians, of 100 years ago, he pointed out how important it is to adhere to simple principles if A.A. is to survive. He compared the principles of the Franciscan order of 700 years ago to the principles of A.A. today, and concluded with a restatement of the Twelve Points of Tradition that have evolved through experience in A.A.

Dr. John A. P. Millet, well known psychiatrist, was the principle non-alcoholic speaker. Dr. Millet proposed more active cooperation between physicians and members of A.A. on the problem of alcoholism.

Other speakers were a woman member of A.A. and two men members. All told their stories of recovery from alcoholism through A.A.

Rev. James P. Timmons of *The Catholic Transcript*, Hartford, Conn., delivered the invocation and the benediction.

makes little difference. There is actually little to choose between them and neither makes a pretty sound. Certainly neither is practicing A.A.

But there is a cure. Every gossip needs a listener. Gossip must have a transmission belt for it to do any damage. It cannot travel on its own power.

Wouldn't gossip wither at its source if there was no one to listen to it?

As long as there is even one gossip in A.A. there will be too many. But, their number could be reduced effectively and quickly if no one would stop to listen to them. Their whisperings would do no damage if no one would pass along anything they have to say.

Even though a gossip is usually fascinated with his own words he would soon tire of them if he found that he was whispering to himself. Then what he was saying would cause no unhappiness because there would be none to hear and pass it along.

Perhaps then the remedy is not to indict the gossip. After all, his behavior is one symptom of a diseased mind and a sick soul, and he would not be gossiping about anyone for any reason if he had been able to comprehend even the barest rudiments of the A.A. philosophy. Obviously, he doesn't know what A.A. is, no matter how many meetings he may be attending, or speeches he's giving, or committees he's participating in, or how much he goes about giving lip service to A.A. No one can put the real meaning of A.A. into words with the same tongue that's gossiping.

The gossip is sick. And like anyone with a contagious disease he should be quarantined. This is a simple process. Just don't listen to him. That not only will help to spare the victims of gossip; it will also help the gossip to recover from his disease.

There is a specific cure for the gossip. There also is a cure for all of the personality ills that afflict many of us. A.A. offers both the diagnosis and the treatment—that is, the principles and the philosophy and the way of life which embody the spirit rather than the mechanics of A.A. By seeking to live this way of life and apply the principles, the necessary corrective process is put into operation. The more successfully and completely one can live the principles the nearer he will come to correcting his character defects.

So why not focus attention on the means of correction and the goal we all seek? The song may be worn out but it's still good philosophy to "accentuate the positive." This calls for concentration on the mental images of what we want to be and what we can be. The one who concentrates consistently enough will correct his defects because no one really wants to be a gossip, a spoiled brat, a bossy run-it-all or any of the other types of bores, nuisances and menaces.—T. Y.

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 A.A. 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

Visiting the Absentees

From Indianapolis

A thought akin to "Charity Begins at Home" has prompted the formation of an unofficial visiting committee within the Indianapolis A.A. group.

The committee meets Tuesday evenings and sets out to contact an A.A. of long standing who, for some reason or other, has drifted away from the fellowship.

The membership list is scanned and those whose faces have become 'just a memory' at the various weekly meetings, are duly marked for a friendly 'checking into.' Often a rumor (and rumors travel with the speed of light in A.A.) to the effect that an 'estranged' member has been having skid trouble, or has confused his alcoholic verb tenses — "he *was* an alcoholic," instead of the true "he *is* an alcoholic," quickly places a name on the visiting committee's agenda for early 'handling.'

The self-appointed committee and its activities are strictly unofficial, as are the reports of its accomplishments which filter back to the general group; but an important — yes, even essential — job is being done, and is being gratefully recognized by those who know and are concerned.

This 'estrangement' condition should be cause for reflection among members of groups over-enthusiastic for new initiates or 'converts.' As one member of our group expressed it: "There's no percentage in trying to use a sieve for a container."—R.P.C.

Recommends Letter Writing

From Manhattan

Early in our experiences (or experiments) with A.A., many of us have found the benefit of practical application first evidenced through our successful use of various forms of diversion during those periods when even the 24-hour plan seems like a gigantic struggle.

Though the "means" of absorption or release is as flexible to individual cases as so many of the other parts of the program must be, still it is quite plausible, I feel, to assume that what

"did it" for us has done and will do it for any number of our fellow A.A.s.

During my several months of A.A. application I have learned what great satisfaction letter-writing can be in this respect. When problems seem too complex to intelligently handle, I know that I'm merely fogged up a bit "upstairs"; when just plain physical desire for alcohol sneaks in, or when I am merely shaky because of pent-up emotions — no matter when or why I need a little calming down—I know that I can divert myself through letter-writing. I recommend it highly to any A.A. who does enjoy writing.

However, I am now faced with the startling fact that it is not too difficult to find oneself wondering whom he should write to. I always

ALKY ALBUM



I'm not alcoholic. I just drink beer.

have my family and other friends at home to write to and know that they would welcome as many letters as I can possibly write to them, but quite often I sense a definite need (perhaps it is due, at times, to a spirit of adventure) to write to someone who, like myself, actually enjoys letters for the satisfaction he gets in answering them. And, by the way, who could beat another A.A. as such a prospect to write to?

While I doubt that a very large group would be particularly interested in acquiring A.A. "Pen Pals," I feel there must be several who would benefit through such a development. It is with that viewpoint in mind that I am writing this letter.

A steady feature in *The A.A. Grapevine* would hardly seem warranted but an introduction of some plan for a letter club, or the like, may offer an attraction to many and would meet with enthusiastic response from members like Yours Truly, who may be seeking such a medium of contact with interested A.A. correspondents.

Do you feel that such a child merits your

fostering? If so, and such an undertaking might require organization or clearance apart from your offices, I'd be only too happy to assist in starting the ball rolling.—R.W.E.

"In All of Our Affairs"

from East Orange, N. J.

I eagerly look forward to the arrival of *The A.A. Grapevine* at home and read it as soon after it is received as possible, usually the same evening. I have been particularly interested in the series of editorials on the 12 Steps, but I was somewhat disappointed in your editorial on the 12th Step. There is a very potent phrase ending the sentence stating the 12th Step—"and to practice these principles in all of our affairs," but this is not once mentioned in your editorial.

It seems to me that this little phrase, which is a big order, and which is the real key to our new way of life is too often overlooked in concentrating on the first part of the 12th Step. We have brought that about by our familiar references to "12th Step work," "12th Stepping," etc. The fact remains that in order to succeed we must practice the principles embodied in the preceding 11 Steps in all of our affairs, and that is a tall order. Certainly your editorial completely covers the two-way benefits of working with others, and I agree that it is one of the surest ways of keeping sober, but not a permanent one. In the words of the first part of the 12th Step we have only had a spiritual *awakening* as the result of those Steps. To attain the new way of life, the complete personality and character change, the peace of mind, the complete happiness which make us and keep us well, we must PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OF OUR AFFAIRS. And the more and longer we practice these principles in all of our affairs, the better fitted we are to carry this message to alcoholics.—W.J.R.

Holiday Bouquet

From Yonkers, N. Y.

Guess I qualify as a thoroughbred. Just discovered this renewal slip in my coat pocket after wondering why no A.A. *Grapevine*. To me this subscription has been a wonderful help and investment. With a copy of *The A.A. Grapevine* in my pocket on the subway, bus, train, or trolley or on the "prowl" it is "open sesame," breaking down ordinary barriers, to strangers, new members, prospects. But the thrill that clicks is with "shut-ins"—(non-members). They too find new hope and interest in life through reading copies of *The A.A. Grapevine*.—Niell F. P.

A.A. Digest—Excerpts from Group Publications

A.A. *Tribune*, Des Moines, Ia.: "Referring to the third anniversary dinner attended by about 1,000 the manager of the hotel got a big bang out of so many guests and NOBODY drunk.

"The A.A. *Tribune* got a fan letter (post-marked Box 1222, the A.A. box in Cheyenne, Wyo.). It starts out: 'UGH: Indian drink firewater. Him bad man; fight squaw. Squaw go 'way. Take papoose. Whiteman drink firewater. Him bad man; fight white squaw. White squaw go 'way; take white papoose. White man quit drink firewater. Squaw come back, papoose come back. White man good man now. Indian no quit drink firewater. No squaw, no papoose, no come back. Indian heap sick. Ugh. HOW white man quit drink firewater? Indian want to quit drink firewater, too. How-HOW? WHITE MAN READ A.A. *Tribune*. Him drink no firewater. Have A.A. in Cheyenne too, 27 faces, we gettum round campfire. No firewater. (Signed) Hiawatha.' "

* * *

Dubuque Alanews, Dubuque, Ia.: "From doing stormy penance in the night, to stand still and proud as these; from wailing litanies of remorse, to the lilting lullabies of peace. All this in a few months time? It isn't possible! No, it just isn't possible. But it happened! These were our thoughts and the thoughts of many another, as we formed a part of that amazing event at Des Moines. And where is the word to use when anything impossible becomes a fact? We couldn't find the word, but H.R. did. He knows them all. When he gazed over the packed auditorium he turned to the Judge and said: 'There's only one word to describe this. It's miraculous.' "

* * *

The Thought Starter, Minneapolis, Minn.: Recent issue of this A.A. publication begin with inspirational poems, such as the favorite of the late Dr. George W. Carver, world famed scientist and humanitarian, and then go on to trace a story and to make comments.

Of Dr. Carver's life the publication says, "It has been said some people grow under responsibility and advancement to positions of authority; others only swell," and after a discussion of Dr. Carver's humility in attributing his accomplishments to God, adds, "true humility is the consciousness of the need of a power greater than our own and a willingness to let that power control our lives. Humility is teachability and an open mind to the truth."

* * *

Weekly Bulletin (Top o' Texas Group) Amarillo, Tex.: "KGNC is running a new 13-week program on Alcoholics Anonymous, scheduled at 10:30 p.m. Wednesday nights."

* * *

The Aridity Review (Spirit Lake-Milford-

Spencer Group) Spencer, Ia.: "That 1st Step is a toughie for most guys BUT it must be taken 100 percent and sincerely or the other 11 Steps aren't going to be of much use to us. In fact if we don't take that 1st Step and admit freely, sincerely and wholeheartedly that we are powerless over alcohol we do not need the other 11 Steps because those 11 Steps are the blueprint for putting our lives on a new basis.

"Just a passing thought. The A.A. program gives the soul-starved alcoholic a mental banquet in 12 courses. Take the courses IN THEIR PROPER ORDER starting with course (Step) number one and DON'T hurry your feast. Consume the banquet slowly and meditatively, ONE COURSE AT A TIME and digest and assimilate them. You will enjoy the banquet more that way and your soul will better assimilate the nourishment contained in the mental food provided by the spiritual menu."

* * *

Weekly News Letter (Deep East Texas Group) Nacogdoches, Tex.: "A.A.s (wives, etc.) will go directly to Mrs. H's on North Mound where N— of Palestine will lead a free-for-all discussion on 'What's Wrong With MY Husband' or 'What a Wife Should Do, or Should Not Do, if Anything', or the 'Chapter to Wives,' or 'What Have They.' (WANTED — two good spies to scout the wife meeting.)

"Let us ponder, the more A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous) we get, the more A.A. (Absolute Abstinence) we want."

* * *

Camel Club Chronicle, Marshalltown, Ia.: "Everybody who is alive does five things as long as he or she lives. If one thing stops, all things stop and then, brother, you are physically dead, just as physically dead as Goering. Everybody who is alive thinks, breathes, takes nourishment (food and liquids, mostly water) sleeps and moves, or has motion . . . Who tells us how to think? Who tells us when we are not thinking right? Who formulates our thinking policy? The answer — nobody, that is nobody but ourselves. We take our thinking orders from ourselves; however, we do have a guide to help us with our thinking — the 12 Steps — and we will never get far out of line as long as we sincerely try to live by those 12 Steps."

New Broadcast Series

Described as a survey of the social, medical, religious and other aspects of the use of alcohol as a beverage, a 13-week "You and Alcohol" series is heard at 6:15 p. m. Tuesdays on WCBS, New York, featuring a talk by Dr. E. M. Jellinek, author of *Alcohol Explored* and director of alcohol studies at Yale University.

THE CLIP SHEET

Lynn, Mass., *Telegram News*: "A middle-aged woman dropped into the office recently to ask for help. Seems she was unable to buy dill pickles; that she was 'addicted' to dill pickles. We confess that we couldn't think of a thing to help our caller. Had she been addicted to the demon rum, we could have recommended her to Alcoholics Anonymous, but pickles is another story. We've never heard of Pickles Anonymous."

* * *

Tulsa, Okla., *Tribune*: "Tulsa bootleggers are taking an awful beating from one organization in this city. Members of the Tulsa chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous at a meeting recently estimated that when its members quit patronizing bootleggers their combined 'boycott' cut bootleg income \$190,000 a year."

* * *

Syracuse, N. Y., *Herald-Journal*: "How often have we heard it said that: 'He is a fine fellow but drinks too much. I can not rely on him.'

"Thousands of valuable employes have lost their jobs through drinking because in many cases the employe did not know he was an alcoholic and the employer did not realize that his employe was suffering from a disease. Can anything be done for the valuable employe whose drinking is out of control? Yes, in many cases, straightening out these men can be accomplished by the employer taking them to 'task' and discussing their condition with them as they would any other routine business matter. Generally, these employes have a high regard for their positions but being alcoholics and not understanding the reason for their obsession, they stumble helplessly along until it is 'too late.'

"It is not expected that an employer understand the problem of alcoholism, he has enough on his hands to run his business, but if employers understand that alcoholism is a disease and talk to their slipping employees on this basis, many valuable men would be saved to industry."

* * *

Batesville, Ark., *Guard*: "If we were to be given the job of selecting the organization in our community which has contributed the most in the past year to solving the problems of excessive drinking, we would unhesitatingly select the local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous.

"This group has performed a service that has all of the earmarks of modern miracles. In case after case right here in Batesville we have seen men lifted from the gutter of habitual drunkenness to places of respectability and constructive service in the community. They credit the A.A. Program for their salvation and are found hard at work in the community helping others who need their help."

A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Matches Reno Hours.— Because Reno is a "24-hour town" the new club house on which members are working, will be open twenty-four hours a day if necessary. Members of this Nevada group will have the use of a library, card room, club room and coffee bar as counter attractions to other local activities. Starting with four members last May the membership grew to 19 in July with more than 80 now listed on the books although 44 per cent are transient. Some of these are new and some were members of other groups in New York, Utah, Arizona, California and Connecticut. Inquiries have been received not only from all parts of Nevada, but from Brooklyn, N. Y., Southern California and even Canada as a result of an advertisement in one of the Reno papers. Various members who travel all over the state and different parts of California visit any one in these vicinities wishing help and extend the usual invitation to any other A.A. members to drop in for a visit. Three new groups, and one day group are reported at Carson City, Nev., Sparks, Nev. and Herlong, Cal.

Welcome in West.—A.A. *Grapevine's* Los Angeles correspondent writes: "In California where everything is BIG we tried to make our welcome for B—national secretary, just that BIG . . . Come again, B., and stay longer!" Los Angeles A.A.s also report that although they do not believe there are any formal meetings in any studios just now, that after 20 weeks of meetings on the Paramount movie lot the Motion Picture group met for a while at the Hollywood hotel and is now at the Masquers Club, 1765 North Sycamore, between Hollywood Boulevard and Franklin on Sunday nights at 8 o'clock. About 150 attended recent sessions of the group which is an offshoot of the Brack Shops Group of Los Angeles. This correspondent also reports first a move to 730 South Grand where a group was continued for about a year until the building was torn down. Meetings are now held Sunday nights at 2200 West Seventh for this latter group. One new group in the Los Angeles area has been functioning for about six months while another is being formed.

Public Gets Story.— Solid progress in telling the A.A. story to the public in a plan for education is reported by the St. Paul, Minn., Group which has four members on the mayor's committee for the study of alcoholism. The committee has been placed under the auspices of the city Council of Social Agencies, making available to them the use of existing facilities including a speakers' bureau, newspaper space and other community outlets. The St. Paul Group

has been swamped with requests for speakers and members have recently discussed A.A. before such organizations as the North St. Paul Lions club, First Christian church, Young Married Couples club of Dayton Presbyterian church, the young married people of Fairmount Methodist church and the inmate group at St. Cloud state Reformatory. Further acceptance of the effort was shown when Carl Swanson, director of state institutions told the St. Paul Group that the A.A. philosophy was a thing at which he marvelled and that if it could be made universal this would be a better world.

53 NEW GROUPS

New groups formed in the month ending November 9 include:

ALASKA—Anchorage.
 CANADA—Nanaimo, B. C.
 GUAM—Camp Wise.
 MEXICO—Mexico City.
 ALABAMA—Gadsden; Tuscaloosa, Box 304.
 ARIZONA—Prescott.
 ARKANSAS—Blytheville, Box 873.
 CALIFORNIA—Los Angeles (West Jefferson) and (Studio, Box 22 Pruess Station); Olive View; Woodland, Box 761.
 FLORIDA—Crestview; Leesburg (Lake Sumpter County), Box 61.
 GEORGIA—Statesboro, Box 82.
 IDAHO—Caldwell; Moscow.
 ILLINOIS—Mill Shoals.
 KENTUCKY—Frankfort, Box 316; Fulton.
 MASSACHUSETTS—Boston (South End); Brookfield; Hyde Park; Worcester (No. 2).
 MICHIGAN—Hastings; Jackson (Prison); Midland.
 MISSISSIPPI—Mt. Olive.
 MISSOURI—Maryville, Box 228; Richmond, Box 1.
 MONTANA—Conrad.
 NEVADA—Carson City, Box 173.
 NEW JERSEY—Glenridge, Box 254.
 NEW YORK—New York City (Lennox Hill); Rochester (Saturday Night).
 NORTH CAROLINA—Chapel Hill; High Point.
 NORTH DAKOTA—Jamestown.
 OHIO—Cincinnati (Eastern Hills); Cleveland (Valley View); Columbus (North East); Mansfield (Monday Night); Milan.
 OKLAHOMA—Norman.
 OREGON—Astoria; Eugene.
 PENNSYLVANIA—Connellesville; York.
 SOUTH DAKOTA—Huron.
 TEXAS—Floydada; Lubbock; Slaton.
 WEST VIRGINIA—Huntington (Saturday Night), Box 1261.

More Meetings Announced.— Cleveland, Ohio — All-Group meetings are being held in the Allerton hotel ball room, East 13th Street and Chester at 8:45 Tuesday evenings. These sessions, supplanting the Sunday consolidated gatherings, are on a three-month trial basis. Various groups are sponsoring the meetings with the sponsoring group supplying four speakers, whose anonymity is assured. There is no discussion period. Regular weekly meetings Thursday night at 8:30 at St. Peter Calver's R.C. Church of Montclair, located at 56 Elmwood Avenue, Montclair, N. J., are announced by the Essex County Group which extends an invitation to all interested. The new A.A. Group in Binghamton, N. Y., known as the Alkanon club, now has club rooms, including a recreation room and meeting hall at 91 State Street, third floor, in Binghamton.

Candles (Only) Lit Up.— Representing several thousand years of individual sobriety, more anniversaries are reported to the A.A. *Grapevine*. The 350 A.A.s who attended the sixth anniversary dinner at the San Diego Club, San Diego, Cal., heard the founder of the Group, a friend from Los Angeles and two men who aided the club in its start. San Diego also reports two new Groups, North Park and Down Town Study, and a celebration of "Goblin Night" by the Dry Mates. Changing from the banquets in honor of one-year members, formerly held twice a year, The Alano Society of Minneapolis, Minn, gave double significance by combining it with the Founders' Day Banquet to be held each year. The sixth anniversary dinner was held at the Nicollet hotel on November 16. Columbus, O., Groups gathered on a Sunday afternoon last month in the grand ballroom of the Neil house where 750 A.A.s and guests celebrated the fifth anniversary. A Columbus member gave a short history of the founding and growth and then introduced a Cleveland doctor who was the principal speaker. Following the meeting there was a social hour and banquet. Guests included invited members of the clergy, medical profession, judiciary, social workers, welfare workers and public health representatives. The South Bend, Ind., *Tribune* devoted more than a column and a half to an account of how more than 200 from 10 cities gathered there and "gave evidence of the miracle which had been performed." This dinner, the third anniversary, drew representatives from South Bend, Mishawaka, Elkhart, Laporte, Warsaw, Indianapolis and Ft. Wayne, Ind., Benton Harbor and Kalamazoo, Mich., and Chicago. The speaker said, "The secret of A.A. is the technique
 (Continued on next page)

of surrender. We surrendered ourselves to victory." The newspaper concluded the account by listing the postoffice boxes of the groups for those desiring information.

Pleasant Growing Pains. — Among the activities of the Memphis, Tenn., Group are the appointment of a member as Central Secretary and club room director as a full time job in answering inquiries and requests as well as club room activities, organization of two small affiliated groups, an A.A. breakfast on the mezzanine at Britling's cafeteria on Sunday mornings at 9:15 and continued growth of the Wednesday night question and answer meetings for new members. One of the two new groups is carrying on separate activities under the name of the Overton Park Group, meeting weekly at the Overton Park golf club house on Monday nights at 8. Memphis A.A.s are happy over being chosen hosts to the Southeastern Conference of A.A. at Memphis on October 16, 17 and 18, 1947.

Plan Vancouver Home. — Plans for a clubhouse for A.A.s in Vancouver, now numbering more than 300, have readied the stage of a draft proposal in writing, detailing recommendations for site, size, management and upkeep, which has been circulated with an architect's drawing for consideration by a committee of the Kerrisdale Group. The proposal is to obtain a clubhouse on the outskirts of the city, which can also serve as a "first-aid hostel" for those needing medical care to be provided by physicians included in A.A. At present the city's numerous groups are making shift by using private homes and rented public halls. With Christmas approaching there have been extra social events, including a dance given in honor of women who were patient with their once-bibulous husbands.

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ALKY ALBUM



A little drink now and then never hurt any one. Look at me.

Near Supply Source. — Since June the Omaha, Nebr., Group has had a "skid row" Group going right across the street from Omaha's famous Hobo Park. For another dramatic touch they had an artist make a seven-foot, well dressed, domino-masked man to peddle a booklet on A.A. in the lobby of theatres showing "March of Time Problem Drinkers" and late showings of "Lost Weekend." About 1,500 pamphlets were put into circulation and phone calls at the club kept members hopping. Then, *The A.A. Grapevine* correspondent goes on, "outstate members . . . are organizing their own local groups and this work needs a hand. Even if all of us didn't want to do 12th Step work, we'd be in it up to the eyebrows." The Group celebrated its fourth annual Fall Festival with a banquet at the Elks club with more than 100 hearing talks by Judge John Tinley and a member of the Foundation from New York. Present were members from North Platte, Grand Island, Blair, Auburn and Fremont, Nebr., and Council Bluffs, Ia. For more than two years two members met regularly in North Platte and remote control members have been driving the 600-mile round trip to attend Omaha meetings. Now they have organized the Western Nebraska Group with 10 members from North Platte, Kearney and surrounding towns. At Grand Island a six-man Group was organized by an Omaha member. Recently 25 Omaha A.A.s drove to Lincoln to meet with a new group. Just to keep things bubbling more than champagne at the Alano club, Omaha, an experiment is being made with a set of recordings, 18 sides, which explain basic principles to prospects seeking information during the day when no member is present. The data recorded is being mimeographed in pamphlet form, pocket size, for 12th Step purposes.

Doctors Approve A.A. — Toward gaining support and confidence of physicians in Tarrant county, Texas, a member of the Ft. Worth Group spoke to about 40 doctors in the county medical association in the Texas hotel in Ft. Worth recently. The doctors gave a spontaneous and approving reception to the explanation and offered their help in attending patients whenever called on.

Wide Awake at Waco. — A beautiful three-story old building, formerly a convent, has been leased by the Waco, Tex., group and wives and members are redecorating the part to be occupied by A.A. Organized about a year ago, the Group now numbers about 40 members and includes in its accomplishments the establishment of a group in the Veterans Hospital nearby. The veterans' meetings are attended by 15 members regularly and continuously as patients are entered into and released from the hospital. All of these men have been committed for alcoholism. The hospital psychiatrists determine which are eligible to enter A.A. meetings in the hospital, based on ability to accept A.A. and respond to help offered.

Another Club House. — The Amarillo, Tex., Group has acquired a new twelve-room club house with approximately four acres of ground. While remodeling is going on for occupation in the near future, offices are maintained in the city auditorium by courtesy of the mayor and city officials. Further doings in Amarillo include establishment of study and manual training classes at night in the public schools for A.A. members desiring them. In seven or eight months' time the group meetings have drawn more than 80.

Double A for Attendance. — A Dallas A.A. who celebrated his first birthday recently has attended 67 closed A.A. meetings in Dallas and 45 in the other cities as follows: Phoenix, Ariz., Corpus Christi and Houston, Tex., Hollywood of Los Angeles, Mayflower of Los Angeles, San Francisco, all in California, Portland and Seattle, Wash., Denver, Colo., Des Moines, Ia., Omaha, Neb., Minneapolis, Minn., two groups in Chicago, Buffalo, N. Y., Pittsburgh, Pa., Cleveland, Ohio, three groups in New York, Washington, D. C., Memphis, Tenn., Kansas City and St. Louis, Mo., and New Orleans, La.

New Group Grows. — Founded last summer by 12 members of the Montpelier A.A. Group, the Windsor, Vt., Group reports a considerable growth from the original 20 with only a few failures. Meetings are held in the members' homes and feature a social hour with lunch and plenty of coffee. Visitors are promised a pleasant memory.