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The national monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, with the hope that it will help all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.

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The Saga of a Coat That "Belongs" to A.A.

From Akron, Ohio

ALONG toward the end of the last act in Puccini's opera, *La Boheme*, the little heroine, Mimi, lies dying in the garret home of her lover. And while the others wring their hands in a "what to do?" fashion (and incidentally, haven't you known a lot of A.A.s like that?) Colline, the philosopher, decides to do something.

Medicine is needed. He has a warm although somewhat shabby overcoat. Alors! He will hock the coat and buy medicine. And so he sings a plaintive song of farewell to his coat—that is, if a basso can be plaintive. He tells how this ancient garment has befriended him in the wintry chills, of how it has carried in its pockets the works of philosophers and poets.

It's a knockout!

This, too, is the story of a coat. It is not set to the lovely tunes of Puccini. It has not sheltered the works of philosophers and poets. And if you're looking for a moral you can stop reading right now. For a moral there is not. It is just the story of a friendly garment, of an A.A. garment.

It was back in about 1943. A small group of the lads were congregated in Henry's barber shop, talking of this and that. Henry, let it be known, is a Grade-A, practicing A.A.

Somehow the conversation got around to the raggedness of some of the new boys, fresh from the gutter, their last decent piece of clothing probably hocked for a crock of high-voltage wine.

"It's hard for 'em to get jobs."

"It's tough to have to attend a meeting in rags."

"It's rugged to try to get your self respect back when the stuff you're wearing is patched and threadbare."

And so on, far into the afternoon. •

But out of that gabfest came a practical idea. We would assemble a "rag-bag." Cast-off suits, shoes, shirts, underwear, socks, neckties, or what have you in the way of castoffs, but still presentable. Henry volunteered to keep the stuff in his barber shop and see that it was kept clean. The idea was that down-and-outers could "borrow" outfits, and then return them after they got on their feet and could buy clothes of their own.

At just about that time the well-to-do father of one of our members' died, leaving behind him a virtually brand new overcoat that had cost in the neighborhood of \$150. It was far too small for the son, so he pitched it into the rag-bag.

That was back in 1943.

A few days ago I was in Henry's barber shop when a chap I had known as a drunk and down-and-outer walked in. I looked at him a couple of times.

"Say, Henry," I asked, "isn't that the——"

"Yep," grinned Henry. "That's the coat. He's the 21st one to wear it."

"And it came back all these times?"

"Well, yes, in a manner of speaking." And he gave me some highlights,

"You remember Jasper M——?" Henry asked.

I remembered that Jasper had given A.A. a brief whirl and then had died in a hospital of pneumonia. That is, they called it pneumonia that killed him, but a lot of us knew better.

"Well, Jasper was wearing that coat when the cops picked him up out of a snowbank. The coat

was soaked through and so was he. After he died I got it back from the hospital."

Then there was another time. One of the boys dropped into the barber shop.

"Say, Henry," he said, "I think I just saw that prize overcoat of yours in the gutter down on Blank Street."

"Good Lord, man," Henry was genuinely disturbed, "why didn't you bring it in?"

"Oh, it's all muddy and I didn't think you wanted it."

But Henry didn't hear him. He had grabbed his hat and was heading for Blank Street on the gallop. Tenderly he picked the muddy garment up and took it to a cleaner.

"One guy brought it back, not because he had sobered up, but because spring and warm weather had come," Henry mused. "And I've pulled it out of hock shops."

But there's a bright side. Out of the 21 who had worn the coat, 15 had succeeded in A.A., had found jobs, bought new clothes, and returned the old coat for the next fellow. And that, my friends, is a pretty fair average.

As I said, there's no moral to this tale. It simply is the story of a coat.

But I sometimes suspect that it has had a lot to do with the sobriety of quite a few men.

The wearing of it must have given them the feeling that they had not regained their self respect until they could earn and buy something to replace it—and consequently put forth just a little more effort that some other down-and-outer might have a whirl at it.

And I'm certain that it has been a help to Henry. For he has followed and guarded that now well-worn garment just as he would an A.A. baby.

And doggoned if I don't feel a little bit better, just thinking about it!—E.W.

EDITORIAL

On the 4th Tradition

By Bill

"With respect to, its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own consciences. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation. On such issues our common welfare is paramount."

This Tradition, Number 4, is a specific application of general principles already outlined in Traditions I and 2. Tradition I states, *"Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward."* Tradition 2 states, *"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience."*

With these concepts in mind, let us look more closely at Tradition 4. The first sentence of Tradition 4 guarantees each A.A. group local autonomy. With respect to its own affairs, the group may make any decisions, adopt any attitudes that it likes. No over-all or intergroup authority should challenge this primary privilege. We feel this ought to be so, even though the group might sometimes act with complete indifference, to our tradition. For example, an A.A. group could, if it wished, hire a paid preacher and support him out of the proceeds of a group night club. Though such an absurd procedure would be miles outside our tradition, the group's "right to be wrong" would be held inviolate. We are sure that each group can be granted, and safely granted, these most extreme privileges. We know that our familiar process of trial and error would summarily eliminate both the preacher and the night club. Those severe growing pains which invariably follow any radical departure from A.A. tradition can be absolutely relied upon to bring an erring group back into line. An A.A. group need not be coerced by any human government over and above its own members. Their own experience, plus A.A. opinion in surrounding groups, plus God's prompting in their group conscience would be sufficient. Much travail has already taught us this. Hence we may confidently say to each group, "You should be responsible to no other authority than your own conscience."

Yet please note one important qualification. It will be seen that such extreme liberty of thought and action applies only to the

group's own affairs. Rightly enough, this Tradition goes on to say, *"But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, these groups ought to be consulted."* Obviously, if any individual, group or regional committee could take an action which might seriously affect the welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, or seriously disturb surrounding groups, that would not be liberty at all. It would be sheer license; it would be anarchy, not democracy.

Therefore, we A.A.s have universally adopted the principle of consultation. This means that if a single A.A. group wishes to take any action which might affect surrounding groups, it consults them. Or, if there be one, it confers with the intergroup committee for the area. Likewise, if a group or regional committee wishes to take any action that might affect A.A. as a whole, it consults the trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation, who are, in effect, our over-all General Service Committee. For instance, no group or intergroup could feel free to initiate, without consultation, any publicity that might affect A.A. as a whole. Nor could it assume to represent the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous by printing and distributing anything purporting to be A.A. standard literature. This same principle would naturally apply to all similar situations. Though there is no formal compulsion to do so, all undertakings of this general character are customarily checked with our A.A. General Headquarters.

This idea is clearly summarized in the last sentence of Tradition 4, which observes, *"On such issues our common welfare is paramount."*

There's One In Every Group --

THE POLITICIAN



This man is not trying to help someone solve an alcoholic problem but is deep in a problem of his own. How can he get his pal X elected as a one-man door committee? If X could be elected, then, along with pals Y and Z of the steering and entertainment committees, he could pretty well run the whole group and be the big shot he so justly deserves to be. Obviously, this type of fellow does an awful lot of good.

TO GIVE IS MORE BLESSED-AND VITAL!

from New York City

An old theme perhaps, but we can only speak from our own experience and to me, at the age of 50, the truth of it comes as a startling discovery. Is forgetting it the reason why some of our best A.A. success stories end in a bad slip? Man gets sober, man regains important job or finds one even more lucrative. Girl marries man of her dreams and when everything seems very rosy, he or she gets drunk and ruins the whole set-up.

Someone said to me quite recently, "You hate yourself, don't you?" I answered that I did, and why shouldn't I? The mess I'd made of my life, the harm I'd done to my children, etc., etc. Then I started to think and realized that the self-hatred started long before the drinking. It began in my childhood, as far back as I can remember.

I was a shy, frightened child, scared of so many things that it is difficult to enumerate them, but some will do. I was afraid of horses, strange dogs, cows, even chickens, although we spent our summers on a farm. The elements frightened me—intense heat or cold, thunder storms, wind storms; I was frightened in the woods and in the fields unless I could plainly see our own house and know that I could get back to it quickly. I must have been afraid of poverty, for I hoarded my allowance and when I did spend it, it was on myself.

Above all, I was afraid of being hurt emotionally, rejected, pitied or ridiculed. I guess I must have figured that, if I didn't give love or friendship, I couldn't be hurt by having them thrown back in my face.

Poor, pathetic, mean, selfish, miserly little girl. If this is self-pity, I will admit to it. My object in life was to get what I wanted or needed for myself, take it back to a safe place and sit on it.

How could such a child love or be loved? How could the girl she grew into fail to know she was a selfish coward and hate herself? "Get what you want, hoard it, protect it, learn to do things well so that you will be smarter than the other girls, play games better than the boys so you can pay them back for ignoring you. Pretend to be kind, for that seems to be the way to be liked and to be liked is vastly important, but don't slick your neck out, be sure you don't give anything away that you might need yourself."

What a way to live, and it was my way until I discovered alcohol. Alcohol (it seems tragic that the thing that helped me so much at first, turned against me almost fatally in the end) freed this cramped, mean, little soul of mine.

It gave me temporary courage and security, it removed the barriers between me and other people, men and women. I really wanted to be kind, I wanted to be generous. Like all alcoholics, I became so openhanded that it was ridiculous. I wanted to give, share, love. It worked like magic at first and for the first time in my life I could be natural, unselfconscious and free of fear.

We all know what happens.. Friend Alcohol turns into a devil and takes us over, body and soul. It frees us only to tie us up in more horrible coils. Now, it is alcohol that we must have—not money, not love, not respect. We need it so badly that the bottle is our only security. Give it away? Share it? Not a chance! Hide it in your closet, in your clothes hamper, under your mattress, any place where it will not be found. It is yours, and no one must find it, or drink it, or take it away. Other people are enemies, even your nearest and dearest, particularly your nearest and dearest. It is man and his bottle against the whole world.

Now we are sober, or to go back to me, now I am sober. I have accepted the fact that I must be, and want to be, sober for the rest of my life. At last, after many years, I can think clearly again, can make plans and carry them through.

What kind of plans? What do I want? Is it going to be the same old story over again? "Get what you're after—be secure—save money—be smart and get a good job—save your own hide and to hell with the rest of the world."

This is the danger point.—M.N.

Job Interviews For A. A. Salesmen

"The best salesmen in the country can be found in the ranks of A.A.," writes Wally S.

Wally, also a member of A.A. in New York, is salesmanager for one of the largest manufacturers of industrial floor maintenance machines and floor products and reports "phenomenal success with the ex-drinkers."

As he jokingly puts it, "The alcoholic has had a lot of experience selling various people the idea that they should finance his drunks and as a consequence has developed a sixth sense."

Wally is ready to talk to any salesman who, due to his drinking background, is finding it difficult to take his rightful place in the business world.

Anyone interested can write *The A.A. Grapevine*, P.O. Box 328, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y., and the letter will be turned over to Wally.

Resentment Described As Spiritual Alcohol

(Speaking recently before the Park Slope Group in Brooklyn, George B. quoted several passages taken from the weekly bulletin of the Church of the Ascension in Pittsburgh. The article is reproduced here with the permission of the rector of the Church of the Ascension, the Rev. Wilburn C. Campbell.—Editor)

THE SELFISHNESS OF LOVE

Have you ever heard the expression, "He is the most lovable person I have ever known, completely unselfish and always doing things for others, giving himself to every good cause." Now the peculiar thing about this lovable person and his unselfishness is that *he* feels that he is selfish! The fun and joy and happiness which are his far outweigh what little he feels he does.

Yes, love which is the embodiment of honest unselfishness is the most soul-satisfying selfishness in the world. Love has a way of quickening one's heart so that it beats ecstatically, opening one's eyes to behold unseen beauty, piercing one's eardrums so that earth's silent symphonies can be heard, and bathing the world in colors of richer harmony. Life takes on an altogether different meaning, is somehow, more wonderful when love takes hold. Love expands your life. You receive more than you give.

On the other hand, resentments, ill-will, and hate shrivel life and shrink the soul. A member of Alcoholics Anonymous said recently, "Just as soon as you build up a resentment against a person or a thing or the world, when you begin to feel sorry for yourself and feel nobody loves you—look out! The devil is about to take hold of your soul and heart and mind. You are about to drown your life with alcohol." Resentment is spiritual alcohol: it pickles your heart and damages it more than alcohol does the liver. Resentments are not natural, either. They have to be built. It is foolish and stupid selfishness to bear ill-will and resentment against others. The others may or may not be affected by it. No good certainly can ever come of it. Definite harm always results to the one who harbors the resentment.

If you would be really selfish, then, cultivate an unselfish and loving attitude towards things and persons.

One final thought: The word "love" is much abused and debased. True love must spring from the one pure source of love, God. God in the nature and being of Jesus Christ is the one perfect Person Whom to serve is freedom and Whom to love is absolute peace. If you would love others, if you would know an expansiveness of soul, begin by recklessly loving God Who first loved you.



I'm a sick man, O'Riley. Ask any A.A.

NOBODY IS HOPELESS

From Canada

We read much about cases like on page 13 of the December issue: "On September 29, 1944, I was literally carried into a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. The next day I stopped drinking. Today I am celebrating three years of total abstinence." Such cases are marvelous. Thank God they are so numerous. We have many in our group. But what about the so-called incurables?

Personally, I don't think an incurable case of alcoholism exists. The trouble with so-called "incurables," I believe, is that we believe them incurable. We start at the beginning by admitting that the victim is, himself, incapable of exerting any will power. We know that no other person (including church, doctors, and the police) has been able to do anything for him and we think that, because we have become acquainted with A.A. therapy, we hold the magic wand that can turn the trick. Of course we are wrong, so we fail and, because we have been unable to do anything, we consider the victim incurable.

It should stand to reason that, if the victim and everyone else has failed, no mortal influence will help. Then why not leave the matter to that Power greater than ourselves? We all had to do that in our own cases. Why not do it with cases we encounter in 12th Step work?

Believe me, it works. I know, because it has

worked for me—numerous times in a manner absolutely incontrovertible.

One of these cases called me one busy morning from a hotel room. He was in terrible condition. His "shakes" were well advanced convulsions. He hadn't eaten for days. His body was emaciated, his eyes sunken and he was very weak. He had accidentally killed a man. He had misappropriated company funds. His wife was pregnant and she and their other six children were destitute. He had been an active and enthusiastic member of A.A. previously and had gone for nearly a year without a drink but he had taken a job in a lumber camp "down north" and had been unable to withstand the desire for liquor which was plentiful—and regarded almost as an essential to life in that region. I called a doctor and we had him put in an asylum but, while discussing his affairs with him, I had a good opportunity to explain to him the hopelessness of his case without the help of a Higher Power. I could do nothing for him—I was merely another human being and none other had ever been able to help. I stressed this point and added, "God alone can do anything for you. I can't. I'll make certain that you don't get any booze for a while—in an asylum—but after that, what?" Frankly, I prayed for him. I said, in effect, "This is in Thy hands. No man, no other power, can do anything and none other can take the credit for returning this man to contented sobriety."

When his first week in the asylum was ended and he was committed for trial on the insanity charge I had laid, he was acquitted but he returned voluntarily to the institution for a longer time because he was still shaky, his wife and family would have nothing to do with him, he had no money and couldn't risk living in rooms or a hotel and, needless to say, he couldn't work. When he did come out and got his first work—a laboring job—he collapsed under the strain. We got him lighter work. He became reconciled with his wife, was at hand when their son was born and this Christmas spent the Yuletide with his family for the first time in five years. He thanks God—not me. *He* has not achieved contented sobriety. God has *given* it to him and God thereby has also given to all of us the indisputable testimony that, if, in His name, we ask Him and if we give to Him alone the glory, no case is incurable.

Another case involved dope. The first time I encountered it personally the victim had lain in a snow bank all night. Police had found him and taken him in. The doctor at the jail said he might not live through the day and ordered him to a hospital at once. I went into the case with the police and with another member of our group who had gone with me to the jail. It certainly seemed hopeless. Indeed, it was the most hopeless case I have ever encountered.

While the others were still talking about the details, I got away in a corner of the guard room and committed that case to God. In my pretty colloquial terms, I pointed out that it might be His desire to make an example of this case—to show everyone who knew this man that booze and dope were terrible killers but I added that, if He would restore him to health and contented sobriety, His, alone, would be the power that could do it and His alone would be the glory. And I said, too, "If he recovers, I'll write a letter to *The Grapevine* and tell about it so that all who read the story may know the lesson that by Thy grace alone are we made whole."

The man spent a year in jail. In that time he got away from dope. When he came out, he started to celebrate his release and, for a time it looked as if he had hit the skids again. But an opportunity presented itself and I gave him the works just as I had given them to the other man. Already he had turned to the use of hypnotic drugs but had kept away from the narcotics so I felt that there was still a last shred of hope. It's a long story, of course, but he has been on the beam for months and has spent his first sober Christmas in 20 years among relatives.

I'm not even keeping my fingers crossed about either of these cases. I don't have to. They are in better hands than mine, believe me. Both are back on the production line; both are again gainfully employed. And neither of them thanks me. They thank God, so I'm not worrying.—C.E.D.

GROUP MEETING DISCUSSION PAGE

(This is a discussion page. Ideas advanced here are only suggestions, put forward to help furnish group discussion topics, without any intention of reaching fixed conclusions or dogmatic "rights" and "wrongs." All readers are invited to submit group discussion topics.)

The A.A. Grapevine is frequently asked: What's the best type of group meeting—open or closed; with one speaker or several; with no speaker and no set program?

The Grapevine would not attempt to answer that question. The type of meeting that is most suitable depends upon several considerations—the purpose of the meeting, the size of the group, the community environment and character, and finally, of course, it depends on the wishes of the majority of the group.

One kind of meeting may prove satisfactory in one kind of community and for one particular group where it would not for a group in some other part of the country. Even in the same town, one type of meeting may be excellent for one occasion and inadequate for another.

But The Grapevine is glad to print the following outlines of some of the different types of meetings now to be found throughout A.A.:

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The public or open meeting usually has a set program headed up by a program chairman, the chairman for the evening or the "meeting leader."

Apparently the most common procedure is for the leader to open the meeting with a brief explanation of the purpose of the meeting and perhaps a short summary of his own case history. He then introduces his first and each succeeding speaker, the number usually being three.

Some leaders highlight some point from each speaker's talk, at the close of each talk, and then sum up at the close.

Virtually all types of A.A. meetings close with all reciting *The Lord's Prayer*.

Other variations of the open meeting, to which the general public or relatives, friends and interested persons are invited, include the one-speaker program. With this type of program, the secretary of the group, or it may be the general program chairman, introduces the speaker of the evening. When the program presents only one speaker his talk usually lasts for 45 minutes to an hour. When there are several speakers, each talk is limited to from 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the length of the meeting to which the group is accustomed.

Some groups also have one "outsider" or non-alcoholic speaker on the program with member speakers at some of their open meetings.

Announcements by the group secretary are

usually made either at the start of the meeting or between the last and the next to the last speaker, at which time the collection is also generally taken for the rent and coffee.

CLOSED MEETINGS

Many groups conduct their closed meetings the same as their open meetings except that no outsiders are on the program or invited to attend.

However, a great variation is to be found in types of closed meetings. Many of them are discussion meetings with general participation; some have formal programs; some are conducted by a moderator; some have no set programs of any kind; some are conducted in the form of panels with questions being put to the members of the panel by members of the audience.

One type of small, discussion meeting is presided over by the moderator, or leader, who states the topic for discussion, states his or her views on it and then calls on each member of the group to give his or her views. The leader for the next meeting is selected, with an alternate, before adjournment.

In another type of discussion meeting, there is no leader and no planned topic. The discussion takes the line of whatever questions or opinions are "tossed out" for "a kicking around" by all and anyone present. This is strictly a catch-as-catch-can kind of meeting, and some members would not like it at all, while others would get more out of it than any other kind of meeting.

(Still other types of both-open and closed can be found in different parts of the world. How do you conduct your meetings? Do you have different kinds of meetings? Help other groups by writing your group experience to *The A.A. Grapevine*, Box 328, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.)

Topics for Discussion

The harried looking fellow you sometimes see running around A.A. gatherings, saying: "Know any good discussion topics?" is going to lead the meeting next week.

Sources of discussion topics are as varied as types of meetings. Here are a few suggestions:

Discuss each of the 12 Steps in succession, one at each meeting, letting several different members give their opinions as to the meaning of each Step.

Do the same with each of the 12 Points of Tradition.

Take a copy of *The Grapevine* and pick out one of the articles, or letters, and discuss it pro and con. Each issue of *The Grapevine* contains enough discussion material for a half dozen meetings.

And here are a few specific topics that can always stand reiteration:

Why A.A. should remain anonymous.

What makes A.A. work.

Why any member will actually get more if he tries to put something into A.A. instead of only taking something out of it.

Visual Technique Aids Concentration

A form of visual aid is being employed by the Passaic, N. J., Group as a stimulant to discussion meetings. As described by the group reporter:

"We have had printed in large clear, black letters, 12 individual posters, with one of the 12 Steps on each. At each meeting we place one of the posters on an easel so that all may see each word distinctly.

"The leader, or whoever opens the meeting, reads the particular Step on display and talks about it, giving his or her own interpretation of or views on this Step.

"During the ensuing talks, this Step is discussed by the other speakers.

"We are delighted with the way this plan of ours has worked out to give us a broader idea of what the 12 Steps mean and to focus the interest of new members on this direct and simple method of learning the Steps in their early days in A.A.

"We thought this might be of interest to other groups, so pass it along as a suggestion."—R.W.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS SPUR GROWTH IN GRAND RAPIDS

Since May of 1946, open educational meetings sponsored by the mixed groups of Grand Rapids, Mich., have been held every other Saturday night in the Grand Rapids Museum Auditorium.

These meetings have been well attended by A.A. members and their wives or husbands and many seeking help for themselves or others. A.A. speakers for these meetings have been drawn mostly from groups in Akron, Cleveland, Canton, Chicago and Detroit.

Many new members have had through these meetings their first contact with A.A. and become associated with one of the various groups in Grand Rapids, of which there are now four mixed or open, three for men and one for women.

Growth in membership and groups in Grand Rapids in the past 20 months has been rapid, and at the same time these meetings have given an interested public an opportunity to learn of A.A. and understand its objective.

Clip Sheet - - Items of Interest from the Public Press

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: "Vicious Den of Pinochle Players Unmasked: VICE RAIDERS CRASH A.A. PARTY—Police Snoopers Smash into Roomful of Ex-Drinkers Quietly Whooping It Up for Abstinence—It was the members of a police squad who wanted to be anonymous and not the Alcoholics, after an incident Saturday night which left the four raiders red-faced and sputtering. As you might or might not know, Alcoholics Anonymous is a group of persons whose purpose is to rehabilitate tipplers. Saturday night is usually the thirstiest night of the week for a drinker and, in an effort to get him 'over the knuckle,' as they say, the A.A.s sponsor a little social every Saturday eve for members and wives. This social consists of card games such as bridge, pinochle, '500' and other amusements such as bingo. Everyone pitches in for the sandwiches and coffee, and a good, dry time is had by all. Such was the situation Saturday night on the second floor at 3701 Fifth Avenue where the A.A.s were laughing it up to the tune of 'nine under the B' and 'four no trump' when there came a knocking at the door. It was the kind of bold, hard knock that settled silence over the 100 or so persons gathered in the recreation room. An anonymous member opened the door, and a broad-shouldered man shouldered his way into the room, flashed a badge, and blustered: 'What's going on in here? We've had a complaint about this place.' Three other policeman-looking men followed him and surveyed the soiree with steely eyes. It was explained that this was a harmless Alcoholics Anonymous social and they were welcome to join in the card games if they didn't mind not playing for stakes. The four men clutched their hats, muttered something about 'we must have made a mistake,' slowly backed out of the door and tiptoed away. Some of the A.A. members claimed at least two of the raiders were members of Lieutenant Lawrence Maloney's vice squad. This, however, the lieutenant denied, declaring that all members of his squad were with him on other business Saturday night."

Sydney (Australia) Sun, January 1: "Sydney Women Alcoholics in New Group—Inaugural meeting of a women's group of Alcoholics Anonymous, first of its kind in Australia, will be held in Sydney on January 14. The meeting is open to any woman with an alcoholic problem and no other visitors will be permitted. . . . This society of mutual aid is expanding rapidly in Australia. Alcoholics Anonymous is non-sectarian and non-political. A.A. is so busy applying its principles to alcoholic sufferers that it has no place for arguments about creeds or politics." **Sydney Sun,** January 16: "Women

Alcoholics Urge Special Clinic—'Many women have experienced mental hospital treatment when recognition of their malady as a public health problem would have been more humane,' said a spokesman of Alcoholics Anonymous Inter-Group today. 'We know alcoholism as a disease. In most cases, proper place for treatment is in a public hospital or alcoholic clinic. . . . Because no hospital or clinic exists, many alcoholics are forced into institutions and gaols where no treatment for their disease is given.'"

Santa Rosa (Calif.) Press Democrat: "There was a contribution to Santa Rosa's Memorial Hospital Fund last week that is, perhaps, one of the most unusual to date. It was a \$1,600 donation. There have been others larger, others smaller, but none with a more dramatic story behind it. The contribution is money that might have been wasted, and came from men whose lives, too, might have been wasted. It came from the Santa Rosa Chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is the grateful contribution of former alcoholics now devoting their efforts to aid other victims of alcoholism, including some now successful businessmen for whom A.A. provided a turning point in life. . . . The substantial hospital contribution is too significant to pass unnoticed, and calls for some recognition of the role A.A. has been playing in rebuilding lives right here in our community, lives that faced ruin as a result of the disease of alcoholism. The local group was established October 9, 1945, with six members. . . . There is now a membership of 75, but over 100 have been benefited during the past two years. . . . The need for hospitalization and medical attention is critical in a great many cases. Since alcoholism is recognized as a disease, the medical profession, the psychiatrists, courts and the hospitals are co-operating with A.A. in every way possible. But the A.A. here recognizes the need for an adequate hospital in Santa Rosa, and is doing its share to get one—doing it with money that cured alcoholics might have wasted had it not been for Alcoholics Anonymous."

Elmira (N. Y.) Advertiser: "It is a great privilege to attend a meeting of this wonderful group which has found the way to bring peace and sobriety to so many hundreds of sick and troubled folks. Its method is simple and direct. It works for the proud and the humble, the rich and the poor—works because an alcoholic of any estate is the suffering blood brother of every other man or woman who has passed beyond the border into the land where drinking is a thief that steals away family and friends and respect and money and health and mind and finally life

itself—does all that and more unless by some miracle he can find the way not to take the drink that numbs and dooms him."

New York Herald Tribune: "TOWN'S 80 TOPERS EXILED FROM BARS—5 Women in Group Facing 90-Day Discipline—Bedford, Pa. (UP)—Drinks were shut off today for five women and 75 men of "known intemperate habits" in this mountain community of 3,500. The ban was put into effect through resurrection of a nearly forgotten state law forbidding sale of liquor to persons of such habits. Proprietors of each of the 11 bars in the town were ordered to post in a prominent place lists containing the names of the 80 drinkers in the police department's 'doghouse.' The lists will be brought up to date every 90 days. If any of the wayward drinkers shows improved habits their names will be removed. Assistant Police Chief H. A. Clark said: 'We just decided we'd put up with these people long enough. If we had to help them home every night, it was a nuisance. If we brought them in and fined them, we were taking bread out of their wives' and children's mouths. This will work better.'"

Brewton (Ala.) Standard: "If there were any who might have gone to the meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous which was held here recently in order to scoff, we are quite sure that they remained to offer prayerful thanks for an organization that is doing such a wonderful piece of work. Most of us are inclined to look on a man or woman who is a victim of the alcohol habit as just another sot. But the A.A.s will soon convince you otherwise. While the disease is incurable, it can be arrested through the own efforts of the victim and with the help of his friends, so the A.A.s say. And they not only say it, they demonstrate it by their own experience. One remarkable thing about Alcoholics Anonymous is that it is not a crusading organization. It solicits no members and does not impose itself on any alcoholic who does not first request help. And therein, in our judgment, lies its greatest strength. It does not presume to interfere with the personal rights, and liberties of any person to consume as much alcohol as he chooses. But it does offer to that person who seeks aid in his problem what seems to be the greatest 'cure' for drinking that has ever been devised. The word 'cure' as we have used it here is ours—not that of the A.A.s. They make no claim that their philosophy can cure alcoholism. . . . The inspiring thing about the organization is the spiritual rebirth that appears to take place in those who adopt the philosophy which it teaches."

Friendly Follow-Ups by Mail

Help Newcomer Get Started

(Following are excerpts from a letter from an A.A. to a new member with whom he had had several talks before she returned to her home in another city—another example of doing 12th Step work by mail.)

From Manhattan, N. Y.

Hi, Mollie: Here are the A.A. reprints and names and addresses of groups in your locality. If you write any of these, *don't* use the words Alcoholics Anonymous or letters A.A. in the address.

A couple of the Greenwich Village Group gals said they would write to you. (Remember, if you feel too tired to answer them, they weren't too tired to write to you. Incidentally, Mollie, from here out try to take the initiative in all things connected with A.A. instead of asking or expecting others to do it. That seems to be medicine in itself, whereas asking others to do our A.A. chores is just continuing what we've always done: leaning on others. It gets us back in the swim in outside matters if we get going within A.A.).

I went to a meeting Thursday night and after four weeks absence found the place full of new faces. So you have lots of company as a newcomer, here and all over the world. These newcomers are sober, have all the friends they want, don't have to go looking for easy company in a barroom because they are lonely. They are back in the herd, understood, appreciated, and being helpful and useful. They are not Zeros or Small Fractions—they are important in and to a big movement and also *able* to be important to some other individual.

Of these newcomers, on the average half of the total number will have slips and get drunk. Half of these will eventually return to A.A. and make it stick. The others—25 per cent of those who took a look at A.A.—will keep getting sicker and wind up in the gutter, the nut house, die, or go out of circulation in some other manner.

The 50 per cent who want A.A. and make it stick right from the start prove that it isn't necessary to go through more hell. I think it proves also that this bunch considers from the start that it is his or her job to make A.A. work—NOT A.A.'s job. A.A. has already proved that it offers everything needed to make and keep you sober—in 50,000 demonstrations including me and other! A.A.s whose stories you

have heard, including doctors, psychiatrists, clergymen, men, women, youngsters, oldsters; college professors and individuals who can barely read and write (at some stage that last includes *all* drunks!). The only requirement apparently is that you can feel pain—or worse, despair—and want to stop feeling it.

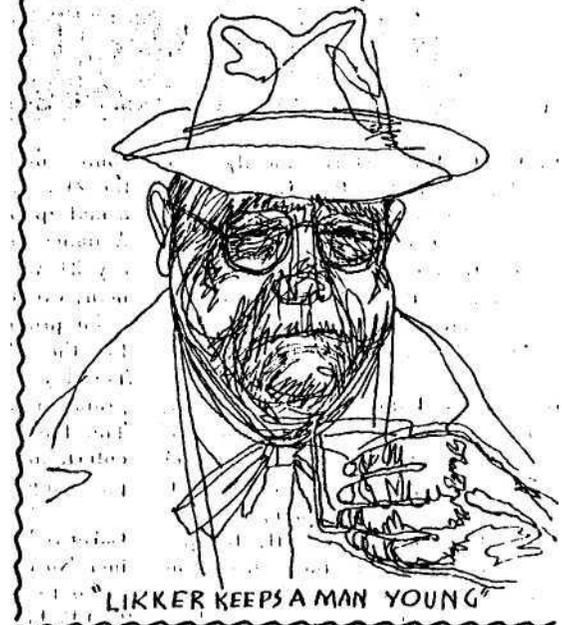
Going back to the slippees: The 50 per cent who have slips after coming into A.A. don't realize fast enough, it seems to me (based on my two and one-half-year slip after reading the A.A. book but before I knew there were groups) that we got drunk on *deeds*, wrong acts, and that we get and stay sober on *deeds*, the kind that jibe with A.A. principles. I think that they think—and I thought—that some kind of magic has taken place and now you are wrapped in cellophane and can't be damaged. Lady it only seems so! (It does seem so. I think that's because we go around only negatively charged—that is, just *not* doing wrong things and not positively doing right things.

The InterGroup Office just phoned to say they were sending down a chap just out of the hospital who is afraid he might still go for a drink. The Office wants me to take him to a meeting tonight and hang out with him so that he can gradually calm down and get hold of himself. So how can I go out and get in trouble—tonight? (My responsibilities! But

then—I figure my responsibilities are my ticket to growing up. And I do so want to be a big boy someday.)

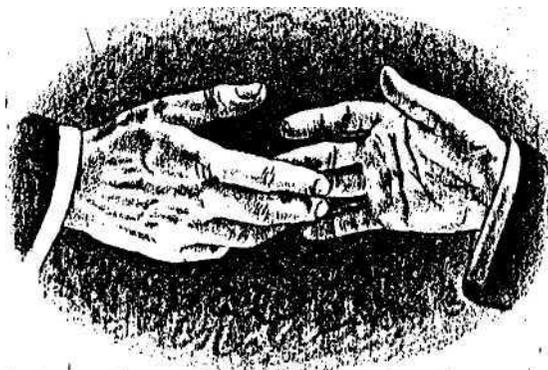
About the slippee again: I just heard that one of my A.A. pals had a slip. My fingers started to cross one time months ago when he said you can't carry A.A. principles into business. That is, that A.A. was for your personal life but business is business and fish-eat-fish. I thought then he was setting himself up as an expert on just how much A.A. medicine is needed to meet, a particular situation. For myself, I feel safer taking the biggest dose I can handle for *any* situation. If I start diluting it, say in connection with my job, or making money, or dating, a gal, or any of my human contacts—suppose I just miss using enough and it doesn't do the job of keeping me sober? Based oh what always happened, I'd be afraid that I never would be able to climb back on the beam. It's hell to

ALKY ALBUM



even dream that you've had a short, secret slip. (There ain't no such thing as a "secret" slip; else we'd be controlled drinkers and not need A.A.) The idea of having a slip makes me a bit sick when I think of the terrific adjustment in my life that I'd have to start making all over again. Besides, the boys and gals who have had a slip tell me, there's, no fun at all anymore in their drinking. The remorse started at once, ap-
patently, as they reached for the first drink—which must mean they knew they were going to get drunk, that they weren't really setting out to prove they could be controlled drinkers—which was their rationalization that it was all right to down a few.

After all that, this is truest and most important: Your ideas are as good as anyone's on how to make A.A. work—better, in the matter of how to make it work in your own case. In fact, your A.A. ideas are the only ones that will work for you because they are the only ones you can completely know and put into, operation effectively. But, you have to work out your ideas and give them a workout. Miracles but no magic. (Faith is conviction that good acts produce good results. So there can't be faith—only superstition—without works. It comes after the act. A miracle is the end result of an act of faith that the mathematically impossible will happen. Again, the act must be performed—or no miracle!) Miracles aren't my job. I just do the leg work. The Higher Power guarantees the results and produces a miracle when one is *necessary*. (They're not necessary too often in my small-scale affairs.) You can't criticize the results or the lack of them until you've done the work. If the results are not good, you'd better go back and examine the work done that produced the results, I find Fifty thousand A.A.s can't be wrong—but you could be! Good beaming.—
Bill McA.



A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Junket by Bus—Thirty members of the Upper Darby, Pa., Group chartered a bus and journeyed 50 miles to spend the evening with the newly formed Bridgeton, N. J., Group, January 28 . . . Passaic, N. J., now has three groups—East Side Group, Central Group and the Passaic Group.

Head of the Lakes—Continued steady growth of the Duluth, Superior and Two Harbors Groups is reported from Minnesota, highlighted by the first big open meeting held January 6 in the city hall at Duluth. Exactly 189 persons, nearly all of them A.A.s, attended, our correspondent reports. The chief speaker was a member from Minneapolis, an attorney, who described three types who come into A.A.—the first who just "lays bricks," the second who comes in only for personal gain and what he can get out of A.A., and the third type, who dedicates himself to helping others and who symbolically "builds a beautiful cathedral" that inspires others. . . . Members of the Pioneer Group of Winona, Minn., had so much fun at their first New Year's Eve party that they have decided to make it an annual affair. Twenty-five attended and all enjoyed the experience of waking up New Year's morning without hangovers. Later in the month five members traveled to Dubuque, Iowa, to participate in that group's third anniversary celebration, and recently an Iowa member journeyed to Winona to talk to the Winona Junior Chamber of Commerce about A.A., with the Winona Group represented at the meeting by two of its members.

For the Public—Sponsored by the five Lake Wales members of the Polk County (Fla.) Group, a successful open meeting was held in Lake Wales January 22 for—as the local paper expressed it—"drinkers, non-drinkers and curiosity seekers." Approximately 75 guests and members from Lakeland, Winter Haven, Bartow, Mulberry, Tampa, Daytona Beach and Wauchula attended. The Lake Wales correspondent reports that the meeting brought one recruit and the possibilities of two more. The Polk County Group, with which the Lake Wales members are affiliated, now numbers more than 30 members.

Newark Has Full Calendar—The latest issue of the Newark, N. J., *Alanon News* (which incidentally was the first anniversary issue) listed for February a card party on the 7th; a Valentine party and dance with a Sweetheart

contest on the 14th; a night of games the 21st, and a Leap Year dance with a male popularity contest on the 28th. A dance and chowder party on January 31 was the last of that month's many events. The Alanon Club's television programs draw good attendance, for the boxing bouts on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, and other programs on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The latest addition to the extensive entertainment facilities is a grand piano, a gift to the club.

Caracas New Outpost—Bob N., a former North Jersey A.A., who has been in South America for two years, writes that he has started spreading the word in Caracas, Venezuela. He first ran a personal ad in the local paper, which has since carried a story reporting organization of a group in that city.

What's a Little Snow?—The Bayside, N. Y., *Times* noted that a snowstorm which all but paralyzed rail, air and highway traffic was no deterrent to the town's local A.A.s. "The regular weekly open meeting of the Bayside Group of Alcoholics Anonymous was held . . . as scheduled, despite the howling snowstorm which raged outside. Little or nothing was as it should have been that night, but nine, sober, happy alcoholics and three friends—non-alcoholics—met and enjoyed themselves."

Six Out of Seven—New quarters for the Henderson (N. C.) Group are ready for occupancy, the membership roll totals about 30 and the record shows two open banquets, with 80 persons in attendance at each, in addition to the regular weekly meetings—all in scarcely five months. The group held its first meeting last October 1, with seven alcoholics present. Of those original seven, six have gained and maintained their sobriety.

Eye Opener Suspends—The *'Eye Opener*, publication of the A.A. Central Committee published at Los Angeles, Cal., was suspended with the December issue due to the amount of work and financial problems involved, according to a front page notice.

Form Social Group—Members of the Durham, N. C., Group have formed an organization for social activities called the Dalco Club, Inc., "a non-profit corporation to aid in Alcoholics Anonymous work whenever possible." New club quarters have been obtained and the organization will be financed through dues, with membership open to all A.A.s in the Durham area.

New Groups—Salem, Va., got onto the A.A. circuit recently with the organization of a new group with six members. Meetings are held at the First Methodist Church on College Avenue, and the group can be addressed at P. O. Box 189 . . . The Laurens, S. C., Group was formed January 6 with 11 charter members attending. An open meeting is being planned for the near future. The group's mailing address is P. O. Box 215 . . . The Janesville, Wis., Group became so large that members from Edgerton and Delevan recently branched out on their own and established groups in each of their communities. Once a month all of the groups in the Beloit area hold a joint



meeting, and on another night once a month the two Beloit groups, East and West Side, get together for a joint meeting. Weekly meetings are held at the homes of members and a social gathering for all groups is held each Saturday night for members and their wives . . . Manchester, Iowa, is another new addition, a group now meeting there every Monday night . . . Five members of the Marshalltown, Iowa, Group traveled to Eldora, Iowa, recently to attend the inaugural meeting of the new group there . . . A classified advertisement appearing in the paper in Jerome, Idaho, testifies to the efforts of an A.A. to found a group there. He's a former member of the New Orleans, La, Boise and Twin Falls, Idaho, Groups.

Okinawa Growing—"Slow but sure" growth on Okinawa is reported by the secretary of the Pioneer Group there who writes that two meetings a week are now being held regularly with attendance ranging from 12 to 15. Although members are leaving the island periodically for the States, as they complete their work, their places are taken by others. New members also are now joining the group from the

military forces on the island, introduced to A.A. by the Army chaplain.

Fun for Wives, Too—For the Kansas City, Mo., Group, the last Saturday in the month has become "party night," with arrangements by the group's Ladies' Auxiliary. Large parties were held on Hallowe'en, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the schedule calls for similar events to be held until spring. One of the objectives of the Auxiliary is to help make the wives of new members feel at home.

Visiting "Firemen"—The West Palm Beach, Fla., Group might lay claim to something of a record for having visitors from the greatest number of different cities. Recent visitors in the group came from Detroit, Bronx, N. Y., Brockton, Mass., Pittsburgh, Pa., New York City, Stamford, Conn., Hartford, Conn., Passaic, N. J., Toledo, Ohio, Park Ridge, Ill., Hillside, N. Y.

From Here and There

The Beckley, W. Va., Group has an active membership of 20 . . . Twenty months ago three men with the assistance of a member of the Kings Mountain, S. C., Group founded the Bennettsville, S. C., Group. Today the group numbers 12

regular members who have helped organize additional groups in Roland, Cheraw and Marion. On three occasions they have chartered a bus for treks to group meetings in neighboring cities. The wives of the Cheraw and Bennettsville Groups have formed an auxiliary which meets once a month, and at Christmas they gave a party for 60 people . . . The Chippewa Valley Group began the year with a regular membership of 15, including one of the youngest members in the country. He's 23 . . . New club quarters have been obtained by the Kilgore, Texas, Group . . . Only two years old, the Wichita Falls, Texas, Group has grown from the original six to approximately 100 members, with a club house, two large meeting rooms and office. Members have helped establish groups in Vernon and Goree, and in the Wichita Falls State Hospital. The Goree Group is only a little over six months old but already has 15 members who, incidentally, are reported to average over 200 pounds per man! The Vernon Group has six members and holds an open meeting each Wednesday while the Wichita Falls Group now has a meeting every eve-

ning in the week except Saturday and Sunday. The wives of members also meet one evening a week, with an average attendance of about 50. The local radio station, *KTRN*, broadcasts, a recorded A.A. program one evening a week.

Planning Convention—The Jacksonville, Fla., Group has sent out an inquiry asking for an expression of preference of dates for the annual Southeastern Regional Convention this year, suggesting that the two most logical times would be either the last week-end in August or the first week-end in October. The date chosen will be reported in the next issue.

Vancouver Camels—Organization of a Camels Club is reported from Vancouver, B. C., where the group now numbers more than 400. Members of the A.A. group there who join the Camels Club will participate in plans for the construction of club quarters.

Passing the Word—Since its start a year ago, the York, Pa., Group has distributed A.A. literature to physicians and members of the clergy, provided articles for newspapers and recently inaugurated a weekly broadcast over radio station *WSBA* in the form of a round table discussion patterned after the Towson, Md., Group program. The York Group now numbers 18 members and holds two meetings a week, one open and one closed.

Prison Librarian Helps—Due to the constant turn-over of patients in the institution, the Wilmar, Minn., A.A. Group at the state hospital in that city has found it necessary to have someone who will keep complete records of membership and advancement and to help in securing educational data and maintain a current and permanent file on group matters. Mrs. Eleanor Johnson, hospital librarian, has accepted the task along with the title of honorary chairman of the group.

To Make 19th Hole a Meeting—An annual golf tournament open to all members of Southern California A.A. Groups is being planned. The course will be selected according to the number of members showing interest, with Fox Hills at Culver City regarded as most likely at present. A nominal entrance fee of 25 or 50 cents will be charged with prizes donated by golf professionals and others. Only other expenses will be greens fees. Those interested should contact Ed L., Mayflower Group, phone PL 1-7083.

Happy Birthdays—One hundred and sixty-eight people attended a banquet given by the Savannah, Ga., Group to celebrate its third anniversary January 31, in the Gold Room of the De Soto Hotel . . . Speakers from Chicago, Kansas City and Jefferson City took part in the third anniversary program of the Springfield, Mo., Group, at a dinner held at the American Legion Memorial Home January 17. Approximately 200 attended. The membership of the group has reached about 50 . . . Anniversary meetings held by the Jefferson City, Mo., and Wichita, Kan., Groups were augmented by visitors from the Kansas City, Mo., Group. About 90 members traveled to Jefferson City, 30 going in a chartered bus, and about 45 traveled to Wichita for that group's birthday. Members of the K.C. Group also have gone visiting lately to group meetings in Des Moines, Iowa, Galveston, Texas, and Springfield, Mo. . . Wives of members of the Grand Island, Neb., Group were the beneficiaries when the group celebrated its first anniversary. The occasion was turned into a dinner for the wives at the Yancey Hotel . . . A two-day celebration marked the first anniversary of the Hastings, Neb., Group January 25 with A.A. visitors from Fremont, North Platte, Kearney, Grand Island, Broken Bow, Ogalalla and Sioux City, Iowa, and Minneapolis, Minn. More than 120 attended a banquet held at the Hotel Clarke in Hastings . . . Blytheville, Ark., also can now mark up its first year in A.A. Although the group is small it is very active and continued growth is indicated for the second year . . . About 100 "happy men and women" attended the third anniversary of the Ogden, Utah, Group, celebrated with a dinner, speaking program and a dance . . . The St. Mary's, Ohio, Group celebrated its first anniversary at the Westwood Supper Club January 27 with 46 present, including the wives of members. The guest speaker came from Columbus to help the growing and active group mark its birthday, with the rolls showing 19 regular members. Plans are already underway for the second annual fall barbecue . . . It was number three in the way of anniversaries for the Stag Group of Erie, Pa., on February 6. The anniversary was marked by a special program and buffet supper.



NEW GROUPS

New groups registered with General Headquarters during January were:

CALIFORNIA — Costa Mesa, Lancaster, Los Angeles (South Broadway Group), San Francisco (Seven Seas Group)

CONNECTICUT — Bridgeport (Black Rock Group)

FLORIDA — Bradenton, Hollywood, Wauchula (Hardee County Group)

ILLINOIS — Ottawa, Rock Island

INDIANA—Rochester

IOWA—Eldora (Pine Lake Group), Manchester, Wadena

KANSAS — Arkansas City, McPherson, Pratt

LOUISIANA—Hammond

MARYLAND—Berlin.

MASSACHUSETTS — North Adams, Provincetown, Roxbury

MICHIGAN— Bay City (West Side Group), Fenton, Grand Marais, Munising, Oscoda

NEW JERSEY — Jersey City (Horseshoe Group), Newark (Forest Hill Group)

NEW YORK — Bronx (Gunhill Group)

NORTH CAROLINA—Oxford

OKLAHOMA — Pawhuska, Seminole

OREGON—Portland (Business Professional Group)

TENNESSEE—Lebanon

TEXAS—Dumas

UTAH—Monroe

VIRGINIA—Fredericksburg, Kenbridge, Salem

WASHINGTON — Seattle (Wallingford Group)

WEST VIRGINIA — Moundsville (Mound City Group), Sistrerville

WISCONSIN — Menominee Falls, Rice Lake

CANADA

NOVASCOTIA—Halifax

ONTARIO—Meaford

A. A. DIGEST—Excerpts from Group Publications

Central Bulletin, Cleveland: "Take Care of That Cold! It's when you've got the sniffles and your back is aching and you feel that you're gonna die, when you search your mind for some remedy, that ye old time rock and rye recipe keeps edging into the forefront. Na! Na! Na! Don't touch that bottle. Get the thought out of your mind. Stop drooling! Load yourself up with lemon juice and orange juice and call a doctor. Tell him, if you value your sobriety, that you're an alcoholic so that he prescribes a non-alcoholic prescription."

Alanews, Dubuque, Iowa: "Sitting at a meeting the other night, we looked at the crowd and we thought of our ladies. Memory took us back 20 years. Here were the flappers of the roaring '20's, those madcap, addlepat, hell-bent, tantalizing she-devils we chased over many a county line in our Model Ts. Brother, if you think the pre-New Look skirts were short, you should have seen them in the 1920's. To us oldtimers, the New Look skirts are not much of a disguise. They remind us of prohibition. The joints are still there, just harder to find. But here were these same flappers, whom we once lovingly called our bungalow girls—painted in front, shingled in back and nothing in the attic. When we bought the wedding license, they thought they had a through ticket to heaven. And then came the detours—detours that led them through corridors of hell that even Dante couldn't describe. And yet, here they were, right beside us Thursday night. Rattle-brained ninnies? No morals? No stamina? No loyalty? God grant us another generation like the flappers of the 1920's!"

The Brighter Side, Waterloo, Iowa: "These are the (12) Steps we took, which are suggested as a Program of Recovery. . . . Many of us exclaimed, 'What an order! I can't go through with it.' Do not be discouraged! No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection."

Thought Starter, Minneapolis, Minn.: "Consulting engineers employed to study defects in a big factory system usually make their notes on their first visit. They know that on later visits they will be less observant. The reason most of us are slow to correct our own faults or habits is that we have ceased to notice them."

Weekly, Jefferson City (Mo.): "When everybody thinks alike, nobody thinks."

Camel Club Chronicle, Marshalltown, Iowa: "Making friends reminds me of a little dog that trotted up to me wagging his tail as though he was genuinely happy to see me. I leaned over and patted him and he was overjoyed. I wondered just how many friends he made in a day, probably more than I make in a year; yet he had never read any books on psychology, but by the divine instinct, he was interested in people."

Rope Yarn, Seamen's Club, New York City: "My Blarney lies over the sea. A sea of suds. That's the way it is. When we are hanging over a bar we are the most wonderful people in the world. What a sparkling wit we have! What wonderful repartee! After a few drinks, how brilliant we can be! It really is amazing how so much brains could be contained in one head! But next morning it appears more amazing still how such a headache could be contained in one head. Truly the way of the transgressor is hard, and this is most true of the poor drunk. But virtue actually can be its own reward and a clear head is the reward we get for being sober, and it is not the only one."

The Screwball, Nacogdoches, Texas: "Don't be alarmed if you fail to catch the full vision of A.A. like a bolt from the blue. Was not your full-fledged plunge into the limbo of alcoholism a progressive business from an occasional social drink to absolute drunkenness? Wouldn't it be just as reasonable if your final, richer, more complete A.A. experience came

about by easy stages—from the first glimpse of the happy way to its ultimate fruition?" . . . "One of the main reasons for anonymity in A.A. is that it helps those who need aid most. It also helps to keep the guy who decides to quit A.A. and go back to his old drinking ways from being pointed out as a 'bright and shining example' of A.A."

The Paradox, Kansas City, Mo.: "Alcoholics Anonymous—Analysis & Adjustment—To the explanation of the initials A.A., which we use to describe our association . . . we might well add the terms 'analysis' and 'adjustment'; for no matter what method we use to work out the solution of our problem those two factors are the basic elements in any success we may enjoy. To most of us the need for self analysis has been too apparent to go unrecognized, even if unheeded, . . . A really honest session with ourselves is all the analysis we need and having come upon the facts, however distasteful they may be, we are better prepared than ever before to proceed with any necessary adjustments. . . . The real and the lasting adjustment comes *within* ourselves and is predicated upon the more complete and realistic appraisal and understanding of our character that the searching analysis has produced."

Alky Argot, Wisconsin Prison A.A. Fellowship: "Humility is the state or quality of being tolerant in spirit. It is to be free from pride and arrogance. It is the opposite of being conceited and vain. Psychiatric studies reveal that most alcoholics are introverts, that we bend and direct our thoughts within us. From this we see the importance of humility in our lives. Introverts are so wrapped up in their own likes and dislikes it is difficult for them to see two sides to any question."

A.A. Tribune, Des Moines, Iowa: "Remember me writing several months ago about the fellow who came into the club and, told us, he wanted to resign? Well, the poor fellow, 78 times arrested last year for drunkenness, thought he didn't have any problem. To me that illustrates how twisted our thinking becomes—we think we don't have a problem, and yet, on 78 occasions it was necessary to lock us up." . . . 'A fellow in from New York this week who travels all the time; when he checks into a hotel he immediately sees the house physician and tells him if, during his stay he can help another drunk in the hotel, under the doctor's orders, that his room number is such and such and he's available for calls. So far, he's received great reception from the house doctors;"

Twelve Stepper, Omaha, Neb.: "Not so long ago, we had a complaint that someone had received very cold treatment at one of our Monday meetings. Is it possible that some of us have forgotten the agonies of that *first* meeting? Have we become so smug in our sobriety that we have no time to offer a word of cheer to a fellow sufferer? Remember, these are the people who could have been you had you not been fortunate enough to find A.A. And judge them not, for you must, not forget they may be 'just a little more ill than you!' Next time you see a stranger there, go up to him and extend your heart, and give him his chance, as you had yours. In order that someone accept the responsibility of hospitality, the board has asked that two people be appointed each Monday night to welcome strangers."

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in The 12 Steps. The A.A. book of experience, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other literature, including The 12 Points of Tradition, are available through any group or the General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.



Suggestions for a new contest are beginning to trickle into the office. A member from a Cleveland Group would like to see one based on famous excuses used by drunks. It could go something like this. How did you explain the broken date with your wife? How did you account for that prolonged absence from the job? A member from a Chicago Group wants a contest about experiences with the pawnbroker. Or how did you raise the money for that drink you needed so badly? We're off to a good start so send us your ideas.

* * *

F.H.M. of the Decatur, Ill., Group suggests a contest entitled, "The most unbelievable excuse I ever heard for drinking," and recalls the case of a man who blamed his continued drinking on the fact that a call from two A.A.s had upset him so. V.H., secretary of the Fairmont, W. Va., Group, has similar suggestions, contests based on the best excuse or the poorest excuse for taking a drink, like the fellow who was so mad because he buttoned his vest wrong that he had to have a drink! Or the fellow who couldn't find the A.A. meeting hall, thought A.A. had folded, and bought a fifth. A.A.D. comes forth with the idea of My Most Embarrassing Drunk Contest. We're waiting for more nominations!

* * *

Don't forget that *The Grapevine* is offering two subscriptions as prizes in the new contest. One goes to the member who comes up with the idea; the other goes to the member who wins the contest. Send your suggestions to the New Contest Editor, *The A.A. Grapevine*, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

* * *

Bill and Lois got away on February 6 for their tour of Canada and parts of the United States. They will arrive in California by March. The other day a member of the Hollywood, Calif., Group, dropped in to tell us about the welcome planned for them. He said everybody was excited over the prospect of seeing them and that a rootin' tootin' celebration is on the way. "Where will you hold your meetings?" we asked. "The Hollywood Bowl. We do things in a BIG way in A.A. out in California!" *Editor's Note: The Hollywood Bowl holds 25,000. Could that guy be kidding us?*

* * *

A member of the Fairlawn, N. J., Group writes that his granddaughter, a five-year-old, really stumped him with a question a few years ago. He was nursing a terrible hangover when he remembered that he had

promised to take care of the child for the afternoon. He dressed, walked over to his son's house, and took the little girl to a city park where she could romp out-of-doors. Every ten or fifteen minutes he would slip off to a nearby tavern for a quick one, hurrying back to keep an eye on the child. Finally, some of the mothers in the park began to notice his strange disappearances. They must have discussed them within hearing of the child because on his return from the last trip she asked: "Grandpa, where do you go when you're gone?"

* * *

A friend who has had quite a bit of speaking experience in A.A. recently ran into an amusing situation because of the same A.A. speaking habits.



He was attending a business convention of all the important bigwigs of his firm and was unexpectedly called upon to address the convention. Unprepared but unflustered, he stood up and spontaneously said, "My name is Joe Doakes and I am an alcoholic!"—A.P.

* * *

A member of a North Carolina Group writes that his clergyman has a wonderful sense of humor. The pastor, who had offered his parish house for the new group's meetings, appeared early on the evening of the first meeting to be helpful in getting things started. He was not the first person there, however. A brand new A.A., from a neighboring town, was sitting there when he arrived. Spying the pastor (who was informally dressed), the new member rushed up, slapped him on the back and said: "Glad to see you, fellow. This A.A.'s a great thing for us drunks!" The pastor explained that he was not an A.A., that he was the minister of the church. The new member looked him over carefully and said: "Well, you LOOK like a drunk anyway!"



Radio News Wanted —

We are hearing more about A.A. programs over local radio stations. Because our checking service covers only national radio chains, we have no way of obtaining important facts about these local programs.

If there is an A.A. program on your local station will you write us about it, giving type of program, dates and time? If we get complete information we will publish a monthly "Radio Log."

Frisco's "Derelicts" Mark Year of Sobriety

From San Francisco

The South of Market Group of San Francisco, Fellowship of A.A., housed in the heart of San Francisco's notorious Skid Row and drawing almost exclusively from that area for its membership, became one year old on January 20, 1948, and observed its birthday with its regular meeting on that night.

Speakers included Major George Ferguson, chaplain of the Hunt Street chapel of the Salvation Army, also in the heart of Skid Row, where the first meetings of the group were held. Another speaker was Edward Wrenn, secretary of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which succeeded the Salvation Army as landlord-patron of the group and gave the group the use of the society's day shelter at 235 Minna Street as both a clubhouse and a meeting place.

The closing speaker of the evening was Juanita W., known to the boys of the group as the A.A. who "needled" the men of the San Francisco Fellowship to make the South of Market Group possible and who took part in the pioneering of the early meetings.

More than 4,000 men attended one or more meetings of the group during its first year. That large figure is explained by the transient nature of the neighborhood, which is the proverbial "wino belt" of the city.

At the Salvation Army chapel, the group held two meetings a week. Since moving into the St. Vincent de Paul clubhouse, it has held four meetings a week—three in the evenings and one Sunday afternoons. The average attendance has been 150 men. At the last business meeting, 153 qualified as voting members, the requirements being sobriety for 30 days or more and attendance at at least one meeting a week. On that date, 84 members, all former derelicts of society, were usefully employed and had been sober from three to 12 months. An even half dozen had been sober since the group's first meeting.

In recent months, word of the apparent stability of a group in the heart of Skid Row has spread so widely that scores of A.A. visitors from all parts of the United States have attended South of Market meetings while in this city.

Members of the San Francisco Fellowship who took part in the pioneering of the group and gave the new members aid until the latter were ready to handle their own affairs, feel that in a small measure they have tried to meet the obligation set forth in the Big Book "to carry the message to alcoholics who still suffer."—O.K.P.

First things first

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

Likes Closed Meetings

From Manly, New South Wales, Australia

We of the Savoy Group have handed over our meeting rooms to the women and have taken the Adyar Hall nearby. For future convenience we will probably be known as the Adyar Group and the women will adopt the Savoy Group as a name. In both cases we are, to my knowledge, the only, completely closed meetings in Australia.

Personally, I had attended open meetings but could not make much progress. Non-alcoholic friends after attending the meetings would give me the usual friendly chatty lectures on the way home, and I would mostly bottle up my own ideas and emotions. I wanted to pour out my thoughts and troubles and not listen to friendly advice.

A few of us started a branch for alcoholics only and we have never looked back. Naturally, I am pleased at my attainment of sobriety, not only physically but I like to feel mentally. I am, now doing 12th Step work and at times become emotionally thrilled with the results. Sometimes I actually feel that power go through me to a prospect. Having had a spiritual experience, I can feel others' pain or joy and work with them, talk with them, and be spiritually with them. We as a young movement here in Sydney look forward to any help or guidance you can give us.—K.G.

A.A. Enlarges Objectives

From Decatur, Ill.

I feel that the frequent statement made by older A.A.s to the effect that sobriety has become secondary with them is an inaccurate expression. I could not reconcile such a statement with the equally oft-repeated statement that sobriety must be put before everything.

I think the explanation is the shifting of objectives as we progress in A.A. We come into A.A. feeling that the program is a means to sobriety but we eventually come to feel that sobriety is a means to the A.A. way of life.

This way of thinking about it does not lessen the importance of sobriety but actually emphasizes it.—F.H.M.

But for the Grace of God—

From Seattle, Wash.

I enclose a clipping from the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* of December 20. (*Editor's Note—The clipping reported that with Christmas only a few hours away, a shabbily dressed, unidentified man climbed over the railing and leaped to his death in Elliott Bay, after telling a man nearby, "I am an alcoholic and I am going to commit suicide."*)

What the man said was the same as what a great many of our members have had in mind; at least I did. Five years ago I was washing dishes in San Francisco and living in a dump in Skid Row.

I joined A.A. there in San Francisco four years ago, slipped three times, then came to Seattle two years ago. My shirts are clean here in Seattle, my old home town, and I am going to keep them clean. I have a fine job, I am busy and happy.—L.M.W.

No Money Problems Here

From Cleveland, Ohio

I just read a reprint from *The Grapevine* on the subject of money in A.A. with which I heartily concur.

Our Lake Shore Group in Cleveland gets plenty of money for dances, picnics and miscellaneous expenses by raffling off an A.A. Book each week, collecting state tax stamps for refunds and keeping a dish handy for voluntary contributions. We charge admission to dances, etc., only when the treasury is below \$200 to \$300. We do not wish to accumulate more than this in our group, which now numbers approximately 100 members plus their wives.

We frown on owning any real estate such as a clubhouse, particularly because an A.A. owning a piece of such a clubhouse can too easily let himself believe he is just a little better than the newer and poorer A.A.—W.W.D.

Advice on The Younger Set

From Quincy, Fla..

I would like to notify your readers of the formation of a group here in Quincy. At present our membership is small, only three, but we have great expectations.

In the January *Grapevine*, Florence S. had an article asking how the younger people might be brought into the fold before hitting bottom.

I have been told that I am one of the youngest, if not the youngest member of A.A. in the United States. I am 20 years of age and have eight solid months of sobriety behind me. I suffered quite a

bit of humiliation, defeat, and misery in the seven years I drank. I would like to suggest these points to someone wanting to explain A.A. to some young person.

(1) Explain the companionship, and common bond of alcoholism that ties all A.A.s into "one big, happy family."

(2) Explain to him the physical side of alcoholism. Show him how much unnecessary misery can be averted.

(3) Take him to a meeting and show him we are not a bunch of "sissies" or temperance workers.

(4) Help him understand that he doesn't lose his freedom but gains a greater freedom than he has ever known.

(5) Explain that even though he hasn't hit bottom as hard as some, he may still come and get all the benefits of the 12 Steps.

(6) Help him realize that this way of life will enrich his outlook on life and pave the way to greater achievements.

On numerous occasions older members of A.A. have come up and said to me, "Son, I wish I could have joined A.A. and caught myself before I got this old." Others have said, "I wonder if I would have had the courage to admit I was an alcoholic at your age." If through some measure I can point the way for others I shall be happy. My most difficult task is convincing the "prospect" that I am an alcoholic.

If there are other members of A.A. who are as young or younger, please write to me as I would like to exchange letters.—J.A.L.

She's Glad to Be Free!

From Muncie, Ind.

I finally got my divorce from John Barleycorn! I just got sick and tired of him beating me up all the time. Honestly, I don't know how I ever lived with him as long as I did. He was making a nervous wreck of me.

The doctor told me it would be the nut house or the grave soon, if I didn't get away from him.

One day, though, a friend of mine (her name is Conscience) talked me into making a date with a fellow named Alcoholics Anonymous. It was love at first sight.

I applied for a quick divorce, and got it. John didn't bother me very long; guess he finally realized I was through with him. He'd better not come hanging around here much now, for my new husband will sure take care of him, but good! He is so good to me, always ready to help and he is so understanding.—R.K.

Feels Thrice Blessed

From Vincennes, Ind.

I am the wife of an alcoholic and I am glad I am. I am glad for three reasons.

First, I might always have been intolerant of an alcoholic; I might always have felt superior to the alcoholic if I had not learned that alcoholism is a disease. And who am I to feel superior? What right have I to be snobbish toward one who is ill? I would not feel superior to a person with cancer or diabetes. Alcoholism is a disease, too. It is a three-way illness, physical, mental and spiritual. I did not know this until my husband became an A.A. and now I want other wives to understand, too.

Second, I am glad to be the wife of an alcoholic because if I had not known the sorrow I had at one time I might never have known the joy I have today.

Third, if my husband were not an alcoholic I would never have seen the happiness that shines in his face when he has helped another alcoholic. I would never have known that deep joy that comes to me when he asks me to talk to the wife of another alcoholic. To see A.A. bring happiness to other homes as it has to ours is one of the greatest joys of my life.—*A Wife*

Fortify Your Mind

From Hattiesburg, Miss.

I tried to change my way of drinking but had to change my way of thinking.

It will ultimately pay you to fortify your mind with courage and patience, not alcohol, so you can support your allotted portion of bad breaks.

Dangers, misfortunes, want, pain and injury, are to be expected by all of us in this life, but that first drink will not stop or alleviate them in the long run.

Remember you are not drinking now, so raise your head like an honest man. After all, yesterday is water under the bridge, only to be remembered in the sense of a lesson of life's experience. Repetition of the old life is out.

The alcoholic who has arrested his disease

meets the obstacles of life as a brave man goes into battle.

While under the pressure of experiencing misfortunes, sobriety and calmness will alleviate their weight and we will surely surmount them.

Where did most of our uneasiness come from? From our own false pride, our own folly and our own disillusioned and distempered fancy. How do I know and how did I find out? Simply by following the advice of the 4th Step. I made an inventory and tried to be honest about it. I used to kid myself as well as others. I found that I had put my desire to quit drinking "above the wishing level."—*L.P.P.*

A.A. Builds Faith

From Chicago

My interpretation of the 2nd Step after 16 months of sobriety has brought me to the following conclusions.

The person who is self-centered and self sufficient, the person who is arrogant and who struts in the presence of his God sooner or later collapses and there is a break-up. The balloon is pricked and bursts. There follows the mental anguish, the inner turmoil and attendant troubles that beset all alcoholics. Why?

Because he or she has no faith, either in God or the A.A. Program. What is faith?

Faith is the hope of things unseen, the assurance of things hoped for. Faith is also the conviction of the reality of the unseen.

We in A.A. after a time begin to regain some confidence of things hoped for, and the conviction of things unseen. After restoration of confidence we become sure of the unseen, and when sure of the unseen, then we are sure of victory of our ideal; that ideal is sobriety, peace of mind and serenity of living.

We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity—is that not faith? If we are not sure of the unseen and have no faith then we are without hope.

Let our credo be: "God, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."—*Ernie L.*

Liked Restatement of Aims

From Chicago

I am always grateful for *The Grapevine*. It's a monthly reminder of my good fortune in being an A.A. in good standing for nearly 12 years, and of the fact that the activity continually spreads, including other fortunate alcoholics.

I was especially impressed by the article from San Diego, "Restatement of A.A. Purposes," in the February issue.

Some seem to forget that we don't aim to reform the world, that we are not authorities on alcoholism, are not educators, doctors, religious teachers, lawyers, or courts of domestic relations, that we should not become promoters (we have been promoting until we dry up) even of A.A. (it needs no promotion), or try to build complicated organizations. A.A. has grown because it has but a thread of organization. Nor should we try to use A.A. activities to gratify our own egos.

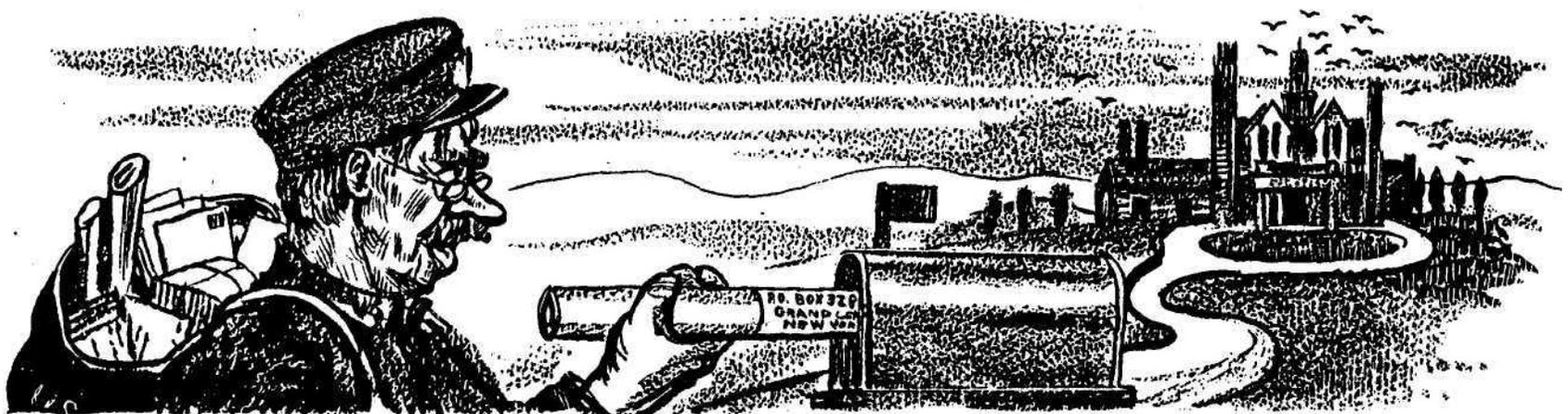
It seems that too often we forget that we are just alcoholics, that by the grace of God and with the help of A.A. we have arrested our malady, and because of our gratitude we should hold ourselves ever ready to help some other poor devil stop drinking by explaining to him how we did it.

There ends our obligation, indeed any real ability we may have.

We can best serve by continuous attendance at meetings, thus making ourselves available to the new prospect, or new member; by assuming our small share of the expense of local meetings; by contributing a buck or two to the General Headquarters each year, by subscribing to *The Grapevine*—two agencies that have carried first hope, then help, to those not located near organized groups, and in helping new groups by passing along the experiences of the older groups.

A.A. needs no promotion; by the example of members, those in need of our help are attracted. We need no great sums of money; we can support our own activity. Individually, we should be able to stand on our own ability to do our jobs,

(Continued on next page)



not on the fact that we are non-drinking alcoholics.

Some weak sisters feel they must proclaim themselves alcoholics to attract attention, but the real plumber, bricklayer, doctor, lawyer, or candlestickmaker stands on his own ability, in his chosen field, and wins the quiet respect of his neighbors, and incidentally his own.

Suppose I am a recovered drunk? So what? I am one of 50,000, no more, no less important than any of the others.

Thanks again for the restatement of the real aims of this very simple program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Let's keep it simple, and anonymous.—*J. Paul S.*

What's on Your Mind?

From North Hollywood, Calif.

Well, don't bother. Those around you know whether it's friendly or false. Just don't bother about putting on the front because when we are false, "what we are" speaks so loudly folks can't hear "what we say." In other words, we broadcast ourselves at the exact level of our thinking.

Realization of this fact is so important to the "growing" or "progressing" A.A. member. That great defensive mechanism—boastfulness—attempts to cover the imagined inadequacies, and yet after a display, it leaves us feeling more forlorn than ever. How difficult it is to be one's self. How difficult to accept the fact that fooling others is only fooling ourselves. Why should we not realize so profoundly these developed traits—and having given birth to these vain and ill-proportioned estimations of ourselves, why should we expect the world to accept them when "what we do" and "what we are" proves the falsity of "what we say."

It's like Aesop's damsel, changed from a cat to a woman, who sat very demurely at the board's end until a cat came by. Let's be ourselves and do the best we can with what we have to do with at the time. And as time goes on, by individual purification and refinement we will grow to such stature that "what we once wished we were" will seem unimportant, and we will be glad for those around us to know in truth, exactly "what we are"—*F.D.*

Pikesville Aids Education

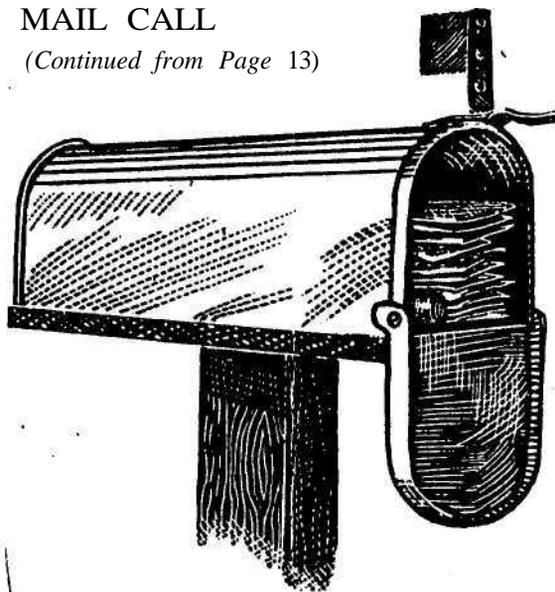
From Philadelphia, Pa.

The Pikesville, Md., Group is following the suggestion of the Spartanburg, S. C., Group about giving the neighborhood's doctors and ministers subscriptions to *The Grapevine* as a means of acquainting them with the vast activity and aspirations of A.A.

Please accept our sincere thanks for the many interesting articles which appear each month.—*D.N.*

MAIL CALL

(Continued from Page 13)



Seeing Spurs Believing

From Bronxville, N. Y.

The Chinese are an old and wise race and one of them said, "One picture is worth 10,000 words." The very graphic drawing on page 8 of the February *Grapevine* caused me a shudder and a solemn thought. That gaunt, nervous hand holding the whiskey glass . . . craving it, wanting it more than anything in the world! All that I well remember. But for the grace of God . . . that hand with the glass is mine. I've lived more in the last two years than I did during the gay, grim, and godless (in the order named) 30 years when alcohol was my love, my passion—and my master. God bless whoever drew that picture!—*P.B.*

Honesty Is Convincing!

From St. Petersburg, Fla.

Those "rascally thoughts" which barge into the mind, urging drink on occasion, are either neatly and squarely dealt with, or they are painfully sidetracked into the subconscious only to re-attack us with increasing vigor another time.

My little formula for them is a true answer, a short answer, and an answer for which the little "devils" have so far been unable to have a rejoinder.

It is simply this: "Sure I can take a big double shot and then I'll be drunk for a year, if I live that long!"

You can imagine how those poor "devils" shake their heads, and with their spiked tails tucked between their legs, walk sadly away.—*Walt K.*

Come Call on Us!

Note to out-of-towners: When you come to New York why not drop in and meet the gang at your General Service Office? It's Room 1106, 415 Lexington Avenue, Manhattan, N. Y. Telephone is MUrray Hill 7-6523.

The Alcoholic Palm

From St. Petersburg, Fla.

Even a palm tree can grow crooked for a while and live . . . travel along a crooked, unnatural path, and then perk up to spread its glorious foliage upward and blossom forth into a thing of splendor.

Over the doorway of the A.A. clubhouse in Clearwater, Fla., the alcoholic palm tree curves upward and over the door, just high enough for the average person to walk under without bumping his head. It is a living example to those of us who have traveled high and low roads, full of curves and crooked paths. It is a constant reminder to those who find peace and serenity in surrounding themselves with others more desperately in need than they . . . that even trees can be buffeted into grotesque shapes by living and growing against nature.

Something happened in the life of this palm tree to start it across the walk, up over the doorway and then down . . . down as low as it possibly could go and continue to live on until something else happened to straighten it up. Maybe conviction had something to do with it, as in the case of an alcoholic. Convictions put a spark into life. Those who are content to hold opinions they scarcely take the trouble to express, much less to defend, miss the fun that people convinced of the rightness of their ideas so heartily enjoy.

But a conviction is a positive idea, never a negative one. It is not enough to be *against*, we must be *for* something with all our hearts and with all our souls. Only then will we really come alive . . . to think and grow straight.

What changed the growth of the alcoholic palm tree? Maybe it was the men and women who walk beneath its arch, straightforward humans . . . walking erect without leaning upon alcohol for a crutch.

In a lovely Florida twilight a woman stood under the alcoholic palm tree, looked back 20 years burdened by sorrows. And yet she was able to say: "To live soberly is to be thankful; to know night and day, and changing seasons, to hear golden laughter, and even to weep softly . . . just to be alive and sober is to be thankful."

For what shall a man give thanks? For A.A. and sobriety; for glad laughter; for neighbors and friends, and strangers, too, who pause in a teeming, turbulent highway called Life to remind us that it is good to be sober and alive.

Pity him who weighs his blessings by counting what he holds in his pocket. Pity him who cannot feel a real exultation and a deep humility as he says, "I will give thanks because I am alive in A.A.!"

For in that is the root of gratitude . . . the principle of divine, law, whether it be human's or palm tree's.—*B.H.*

A.A. Contacts Help Wives In Comeback

From Ogden, Utah

The Ogden Group of Alcoholic Anonymous held its first open meeting something over a year ago. I attended that meeting. I sat all alone in the very back row.

I went home from that open meeting and told my husband all about the Alcoholic Anonymous Program, he was interested, but not sufficiently to investigate further. I thought about it a lot and read everything that came my way on the subject. Evidently he did too. I was greatly surprised a few months ago when my husband came home and announced that he was going to investigate the A.A. Program and that two men were going to call on him that very evening.

They came and talked to him. They told him of their experiences and explained the Program to him, and invited him to attend a meeting the following Saturday night.

I did not stay in the room while they were talking. I felt it better to let them talk together man to man. They left the book entitled *Alcoholics Anonymous* for him to read at his leisure.

Saturday afternoon, my husband invited me to go to the meeting with him that night. I wasn't sure I was supposed to go, but he reassured me so I went.

The stairway to the A.A. club rooms is very steep and narrow. We paused in the hallway as we were about to go up and these words ran through my mind, "Straight is the path and narrow is the way." That stairway has become a symbol to me. I regard it as an obstacle course which an alcoholic must travel on his road to recovery. Each step could well be a trap that would cause him to stumble, fall and even when he has almost reached the top plunge him clear to the bottom badly bruised and shaken from his course. But look! On the right is a sturdy handrail, symbolizing the Alcoholics Anonymous Program; if he will but grasp it firmly, he will be able to march steadily onward and upward into the ultimate light of sobriety.

The non-alcoholic section of the meeting is just like any other well conducted women's club. (Our weekly open meeting is divided into two sections, one for the alcoholics and the other for the non-alcoholic wives, sisters, friends, etc.). There are, however, these paramount differences between this non-alcoholic group and other clubs. Since joining, I have never heard a religious, political, or any other kind of argument, nor have I seen vanity flamboyantly displayed. The blight of alcoholism through the years has bowed us down, until now, in our new found freedom through A.A. and consequent

sobriety in our homes, we are humble, grateful, and not too self-satisfied,

During our years of battle against alcohol we have built a reserve around ourselves as a defense against the rest of the world. We have built up fierce pride and resentment, and have determined that although we hated and detested the alcoholic problem in our lives, the rest of the world should not know it if we could keep them from doing so. Too often we fooled only ourselves. So we came into the A.A. Program—tense, morose, often sullen and resentful, and often as neurotic and ill as our alcoholics.

One meeting is enough to make us realize that here in this very room with us are 25 or 30 women just like us, who have faced identical or worse problems than ours, and yet they are all chatting happily together as if they hadn't a care in the world. It seems to me that the A.A. Program wipes the slate clean; and sets us all off to a fresh start with a new lease on life, and frees us from that stiff and unnatural attitude toward the world in general.

Each meeting night, one Step of the 12 Steps of the Program is discussed at length. Individual problems are brought up. The new members have many and the older members help so much with their counsel and advice. New members are introduced to the group. Strict formality is conspicuous by its absence and the air fairly vibrates with a feeling of friendliness and goodwill. There is no feeling of being a stranger within the gates.

We, I mean our family, are grateful for the A.A. Program. We are grateful to the men who introduced it in our home, and I haven't words to express our gratitude for the effects of the Program on our lives.

If we in turn can help someone as A.A. members have helped us, it will take us the rest of our lives to show our gratitude in deeds of helpfulness to others, for "Faith without works is dead."—A.H.McK.

* * *

From The Alky Argot

Burning the candle at both ends is a poor way of making ends meet.

* * * *

From The Twelve Stepper

Liquor doesn't drown your troubles—it only irrigates them!



ALABAMA PAPER HELPS OKLAHOMAN SURVIVE COLORADO

From Oklahoma City, Okla.

As was our usual custom, my wife, daughter, and I, went to Manitou, Colorado, the first of July, last year. I had been an A.A. for about seven months, and had been on the Program. This year we had rented, a house and when we arrived everything was in a mess and things did not start off too well. The house had not been cleaned up as expected. Weeds and grass were up to my waist, and we had difficulty in getting gas, water and lights turned on. We had driven all night and we arrived about 11 A.M. and it was really hot, especially for Colorado. Not too good a setting for an alcoholic. It was a little early for many vacationists. Well, I am putting it mildly when I say, that for the first few days especially it was difficult for me to maintain sobriety. I survived, however, and I would like to relate what I believe saved me.

Previous to this year these conditions would not have bothered me for I would have been pretty tight when I arrived and would just have turned everything over to my wife and gone to a bar, for it's quite true that this is the first year that I hardly knew what Colorado water tasted like.

Well, the first night I pulled a chair up by my bed and got out the "Big Book" and I'm telling you I worked the 24-hour part of the program the first week as I never worked it before. In addition to this, I contacted the A.A. Group in Colorado Springs. But this still was not enough. They told me of a nurse at Cripple Creek about 50 or 60 miles from there who had been having a lot of trouble. So the next morning I told my wife to get ready, that we were going to Cripple Creek. We did and I am sure it was a trip well spent for both the nurse and me. Perhaps it did me much more good than her. This is still not all that kept me sober.

I have a brother in Birmingham, Ala., who has always been a tee-totaller. I wrote him quite a lengthy letter about me and A.A. Immediately I received an air mail reply and a copy of *The Sahara* (the Birmingham Group's paper). He knew a lot about A.A. and was so happy to hear I had aligned myself with them that he wrote *The Sahara* a letter and enclosed a check for the work of A.A. Of course they returned the check and I knew nothing of this until they published his letter in the following issue. He asked them to mail me *The Sahara* there during July and August. They were kind enough to do so and have been mailing it to me ever since. I give this incident and *The Sahara* credit for a large part in getting me over that first week or ten days. From then on I have had no trouble.—G.A.P.

Applause

From Detroit, Mich.

The chairman of the Parkdale Group, Toronto, Ontario, raised an interesting question during a talk before the group there, he spoke as follows:

"Flushed with success, I held my violin at my side and bowed to the roaring applause. Again and again, I played short encores, yet the applause continued. I was wonderful and I knew it. I joined them in toast after toast to my virtuosity. Then I departed, shoved myself behind the wheel of my car and awakened to find myself in a steel barred cage."

"Yes, the applause had done it again. I got off with a reckless driving charge, thanks to friends. I also took stock. I can't take applause without a drink. I quit the concert stage. I took a subordinate position in a stock broker's office. Now, as I speak to the Parkdale Group of Alcoholics Anonymous I ask that when I am finished there be no applause, no flattering remarks. I can swallow those only with a drink."

As the speaker finished an inspiring talk there was no applause. None of the 75 A.A.s and visitors told him he was good when the coffee and doughnuts were served. He had found out the truth about himself, and his fellow A.A.s respected his utter honesty. And only by such honesty and candor with oneself and one's fellow men, can an A.A. get in tune with his God and keep his feet firmly on the good earth.

At this same meeting, three other speakers were applauded at the end of their talks. Should they have been? Why? A.A. is no show. Neither is it a church. Yet, it is so much a part of the Lord's work, that the meeting was taking place in a church.

Our unsung chairman that night observed that when a speaker at an A.A. meeting is talking for the applause and laughter he expects to get, he is quite likely to exaggerate. And, when that occurs every real A.A. knows it. That speaker is known as a "phoney" in A.A.; circles, until he proves himself honest.

There is a great temptation to "color up" and otherwise adorn an A.A. story when the speaker speaks too often. Take it easy. Don't be a zealot. The root of all evil is speech—too much of it, that is. If you're inclined to be a "professional" A.A. speaker, stop and take stock. Remember what applause did to one man; it stopped a successful concert stage career.

How about ending applause at A.A. meetings? Silent humility is much better, our Bible tells us. What do you think?—F.C.O.

Easy does it



(Ol' John's Juice)

"Plenty of time for jus' one more drink, pal, an' I'm buying thissun," insisted Drunk No. 1 pointing at the clock on the railroad station.

"Okay, one more before the train goes," agreed Drunk No. 2, setting down a suitcase for the 12th time. "Here's lookin' atcha."

"Lotsa time, gents, drink hearty," suggested the barkeep—no man to let an easy buck hastily depart.

Ten minutes and three drinks later, the final call of "A-l-l-a-b-o-a-r-d," sounded from the station gate. The two drunks galvanized into action. Grabbing change, hats, newspapers and suitcase they sprinted in a dizzy and spectacular broken-field run through the gate. Down the platform they charged, Drunk No. 1 leading by a lurch. Suddenly the train began to move. Drunk No. 1 tripped and fell. Drunk No. 2, nimble as a goat, skipped over his fallen comrade, and using the body as a platform for his spring, caught the moving train and swung aboard.

Breathless, the station attendant arrived in time to help the fallen drunk to his feet. "Wonderful running! I never thought you'd make it in time to get your friend on that train."

Stew No. 1 thoughtfully scratched his head. "Yessir! Now I'm wunnerin' if m'pal knows where he's goin' when he gets there. He only came down to see me off."

* * *

Diligently working his way down the bar, drink by drink, a roving male drunk finally came alongside a blond female drunk who was nuzzling at the rim of her sixth Martini. "Huh lo, Sis," he greeted.

"Huh lo, Bub," greeted she.

"Think maybe seven of those will make you dizzy?" inquired the rover.

The blond hiccuped gently. "The count's right, son, but y'u got my name wrong."

* * *

A midget toddled into a saloon late one evening. He climbed on the brass rail, stood on tiptoe, and signaled the barkeep. As one lone customer watched, the barkeep poured three drinks and set them within reach of the midget's arm. In three gulps, the triple-barleycorn vanished. Then, up to the top of the bar climbed the little

man. Straight up the side wall, over the ceiling, down the bark wall and out of the door ran the midget.

The lone customer's eyes popped, he turned to the barkeep. "Did you see 'im climb those walls without sayin' a word?"

The barkeep shrugged. "The little guy's moody, tha's all. Sometimes he says he's gonna climb; sometimes he doesn't say a bloomin' word."

* * *

From Kentucky comes this aged-in-the-wood dram forwarded by F.K.D., who writes:

"Upon inquiring of a man who had about reached the bottom of degradation from his long bout with old John B. as to just why he did it, his answer was 'he drank the way he did to prevent him from worrying about the wicked life he was living.'

"Now I think I've heard *all* the excuses."

* * *

from *The Central Bulletin*

And then there was the dying midget who ordered a short bier.

* * *

From J. R., *Grand Island, Neb.*

To see if he, couldn't do something about his hearing, the drunk went to a doctor. The doctor informed him that if he would quit his drinking, he was sure that his hearing would improve. The drunk quit drinking and upon meeting the doctor a week or so later told him his hearing was fine. However, about a month after that, the doctor happened upon the drunk who was about three sheets to the wind. The doctor said, "I thought you had quit drinking?"

The drunk replied, "I liked what I drank so much better than what I heard that I started drinking again."

* * *

From Bruce H., *St. Petersburg, Fla.*

The collection box for the "kitty" was missing at a meeting, so a hat was passed in its place. As it passed from hand to hand, and aisle to aisle, the hat was greeted with giggles and loud bursts of laughter. When the meeting chairman examined the hat he found it contained a card; with the owner's name and the admonition: "Like hell it's yours. Put it back!"

* * *

Got any good stories? Send 'em in to Ol' John. -

