

November 1950

AA

is not big business

THANKSGIVING is coming. And with it, Tradition Week. I never felt happier.

Our traditions are set down on paper. But they were written first in our hearts. For each of us knows, instinctively I think, that AA is not ours to do with as we please. We are but caretakers to preserve the spiritual quality of our fellowship; keep it whole for those who will come after us and have need of what has so generous-

ly been given to us.

We learned our lesson about money early. We feared organization lest we solidify and destroy ourselves as a *movement!* At the same time we faced the moral and humane obligation to make our program instantly available to all who asked for it. And they came in ever increasing numbers.

Yes, we've had need of money and we've had to provide services. But we've resolved never to allow

either money or the management of our necessary affairs to obscure our spiritual aims. The same loving God whose Divine Wisdom has shown us that one desperate and shaky drunk, fumbling for a nickel to call for help, looms larger than any 'organization' we shall ever have, or need!

At Cleveland, July last, 7000 AAs set their approval to the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. We took our destiny by the hand. Alcoholics Anonymous had grown up.

Three of those Traditions define the "Services" of Alcoholics Anonymous and outline our collective responsibility for them — management responsibility and money responsibility. The Tradition also says that our trusted servants shall never govern; that they shall always be directly accountable to those they serve.

Last month I broadcast to you the members of Alcoholics Anon-

*In gratitude, Bill
explains a plan to
preserve AA ... but
not to rule it!*



mous — an urgent appeal. It was a plea that you take full money responsibility for your AA Headquarters — the Alcoholic Foundation and its AA General Service Office at New York. We who work in your Headquarters are delighted with the result. Groups who never helped before have now done so. New groups, very small groups, institutional groups not really under any obligation, have made sacrifices. If this keeps up, our deficit at Headquarters will be a thing of the past. Never have I been so encouraged about the future of our Services. Your generous and responsible action makes a fitting setting for the news I am about to give you.

For twelve years, warmly aided by great friends, Dr. Bob and I have stood sentinel over your Headquarters. We have, been holding these valuable assets in trust for you — your General Service Office, your book "Alcoholics Anonymous", your principle magazine *The A.A. Grapevine*, your public relations,

your common funds. We have never asked you to take any direct responsibility for them. But times have changed. Alcoholics Anonymous is now grown. Its founders are perishable. We cannot be your guardians always.

So the hour is come when you must take these things into your own keeping. We ask that you guard them well for the future of Alcoholics Anonymous may much depend on how you maintain and support these life-giving Arms of Service.

Anticipating that you will happily accept this new responsibility, the Trustees, Dr. Bob and I propose *The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous*; a body of State and Provincial representatives who will sit yearly with our Foundation Trustees as their traditional guide. We have long considered and will soon present a detailed plan designed to bring this great change about.

Alcoholics Anonymous *has* come of age. It's a great Thanksgiving!

