

September 1960

AA's Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration

An Eyewitness Report

BY God's grace we are here assembled in grateful remembrance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of our fellowship.

At this meaningful quarter-century mark, we are deeply aware that we stand upon the threshold of a great door which opens wide into our future. Ours can be a destiny of ever-increasing promise and fulfillment. Our faith in this vision has never faltered.

But the future would still lack its full use and meaning did it not bring us fresh problems and even acute perils—problems and perils through which we can grow into true greatness of action and spirit.

To these ends we have pledged our lives and fortunes; we here rededicate ourselves to an ever-deepening love of each other . . . love for the wondrous creation in which we live and serve . . . and love for its supreme author, God Himself.

This is the sense of our meeting—

We now entrust you twelve from AA's furthest reaches—you who symbolize the unique and loving communication that is ours in this universal fellowship—with this message to members everywhere; and most especially to all those others who still know not, and who, God willing, may soon issue out of their darkness into light.

With these words Bill W. closed the great meeting on Saturday night July 2 at the Veterans' Memorial Stadium in Long Beach, California. Nearly 10,000 AA members with their friends and families from all

parts of the AA world listened in grateful silence as the twelve AA members representing Australia, England, Norway, Belgium, Scotland, W. Germany, South Africa, the Canal Zone, Puerto Rico and El Salvador accepted copies of this "rededication" from AA's co-founder to take back to their home areas.

The long speaker's platform was framed by a backdrop of golden drapes on either side of the huge AA banner, a blue triangle on white with the words *Recovery*, *Unity*, and *Service* bordering each side. Directly in front of the backdrop the flags of participating nations rippled in the breeze. The night was brilliantly clear and on one side of the platform off in the distance a small illuminated cross a-top an unseen church hung, seemingly, suspended in the air. On the other side high and aloof the new moon floated. Symbolic blessings on our gathering together! It was a scene of extraordinary loveliness as well as strength and grace.

The Friday night before in this same impressive setting Bill had paid tribute to AA's dedicated and loving non-alcoholic friends and families and to the faithful, long-serving non-AA Trustees seated with him on the stage. He had then told his personal story, and of his search for freedom under God. On this Saturday night, before giving the message of rededication printed above, he spoke of the meaning of AA's Twelve Traditions as they related to this same search for freedom under God by the total fel-

lowship of AA. After a sobering AA inventory he gave us the choice of "settling for self-satisfaction and mediocrity or of growing into greatness of spirit and of action."

On Sunday morning under a vivid blue California sky, the spiritual nature of our program and our obligations and gratitude to God and our fellow man were beautifully expressed by the Right Reverend Monsignor John J. Dougherty and the Reverend Sam Shoemaker before a meeting led by Bill W. Every AA present joined in love and deepened unity as this last serious gathering closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Sunday night was the night of the Big Show planned and produced by the entertainment committee. It was a gay and lively two hours of sheer fun. Each member of the cast—with the possible exception of a disgruntled chimpanzee who forgot his lines—was a professional entertainer of world-wide fame. The anonymity of the AA players as well as the non-AAs must be guarded here as it was by the press, so it is impossible to detail the contribution each made to this wonderful performance. We are sure, however, it is not an exaggeration to say that never in the history of show business have great personalities given so freely of their talents and affections to a more appreciative audience. At the close of the evening the entire audience joined the cast in softly singing the moving words "Now is the hour when we must say good-by"-then at the count of three

by our MC the bright spots on the stage went dark and ten thousand matches glowed against the evening sky. And so in deep peace and love, joy and confidence, the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous offi-

cially came to its ending.

H. W., Staff Member

(Ed. note—In the November issue the Grapevine will print some of the major papers as well as more Convention highlights and condensed versions of Bill's talks.)