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CHICAGO AA - in a nice, humble way, of course — is proud of its unity.

Going into its 13th year, Chicago AA has thousands of members and scores upon scores of groups. These groups meet in homes and in halls, at various hours of the day and night, at Saturday night open houses, at Sunday morning breakfasts, at Sunday afternoon get-togethers.

But the members meet, too, regularly each week in joint sessions as members of The Chicago Group. And they regard themselves, primarily, as members of The Chicago Group.

There is in Chicago one of the paradoxes frequently encountered in AA. Unity comes because of, not despite separation.

Always Chicago has recognized the need for the small, closely knit group. This is the way all AA groups start. As they grow, the intimacy, the informality, the heart-

to-heart and man-to-man relationships tend to be lost.

To keep these an integral part of Chicago AA, groups were encouraged to separate and to divide and to re-divide as their memberships grew.

Chicago AAs can form any kind of group they desire, meet whenever and wherever they desire, conduct their discussions as they desire. The elders encourage this sort of thing. There is no thought that these are dissidents or rebels.

After all, there is the knowledge of the alcoholic personality, the knowledge that AA is a highly individualistic program, the knowledge that the more intimacy in AA, the greater its gifts.

Each of these groups is autonomous. Each, through committees, has a voice in the affairs of The Chicago Group. Each recognizes its responsibility for the overall welfare of AA in Chicago.

Chicago AA accepts the Twelve Steps and the implications of the

Steps. Effort has been made, from the beginning, to learn them, to teach them, and to observe them. Chicago has sought to keep its AA simple.

Most Chicago AAs believe in God as the power in and the source of AA strength. There has been no attempt to force that belief upon those who can not so believe. AA in Chicago has not been narrow, intolerant. Chicago AAs are too grateful for that.

Chicago AA has found that AA can pose no problem that the Steps and the Traditions cannot solve.

There have been no leadership difficulties in Chicago. There is a humble recognition that no man has done one ten-thousandth as much for AA, as AA has done for him. The need for anonymity on the public level, a need both practical and spiritual, has long been a part of the Chicago creed.

There is the common sense realization that sobriety is the most

important material thing in the alcoholic's life.

An early day story tells of a young member grouching to the oldest member — the group wasn't being run right, what about this slipper? what about that? etc.,etc.,etc.

At long last the oldest member turned on his heel and, over his shoulder, asked; "What the hell are you hollering about? You're sober, aren't you?"

This was no short answer but a basic truth. It dawned on the younger member as it has dawned on most Chicago AAs: What does an AA have to holler about if he is sober?

Place sobriety in one tray of the scales. Place the problems, the difficulties, the personality conflicts, the gripes in the other.

One sees quickly, clearly the weight and value of sobriety.

That seeing — that nothing matters so much as sobriety — has made for Chicago's unity, Chicago's progress, Chicago's growth.