

August 1961

FORMULA FOR AN AA MEETING

in the CLEVELAND Area

*From the birthplace of AA come customs that stand
the test of time*

OUR meetings are attended by members, their wives, husbands and widows. The only closed meetings are for women only or men only. We have two of each in the Cleveland area and one each in Akron. Occasionally a preacher, a personnel director or a judge will attend one of our meetings as a guest of an individual AA member. Three times yearly our Central Committee in Cleveland sponsors a Consolidated Meeting made up of members from Cuyahoga County groups and their interested friends. This is usually called an open meeting for interested people, *not prospects*.

We usually have one speaker. He opens with his personal prayer, the Serenity Prayer or a silent prayer. Then he speaks (we call it leads) from thirty to fifty minutes. He then asks the group to join with him in the Lord's Prayer and then the meeting is opened for comments, questions or discussion. This can go for fifteen or twenty minutes and I have seen some

go for an hour and get pretty hot.

If the chairman keeps things in hand fairly well, our meetings usually wind up in about ninety minutes. Announcements are read by the secretary before the group has coffee and pastry. Some groups have sandwiches, occasionally, instead of pastry all of the time. Others have potluck suppers that prove to be quite popular. We call our new members "babies."

In all of my travels throughout the U. S. and Canada I truly believe that our members are less concerned about their anonymity among themselves than any other part of these two countries. At the public level I don't believe we have had a break in anonymity since around 1946.

Since September of 1959 my group has been having assigned subject meetings. By having our speakers talk on particular aspects of the program we have been listening to *prepared* talks and not too much blow-by-blow drinking experiences. This

has resulted in some very interesting discussion periods and a considerable increase in attendance. The Independence Group is the only group that I know of doing it this way. So far we haven't had any rocks thrown at us.

Because we have St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Rosary Hall at St. Vincent Charity Hospital in Cleveland and several good alcoholic nursing homes in the area, we do have

many opportunities for on-the-spot Twelfth Step work.

We have found that the bottom in AA has been raised considerably in the last three years and the majority of new members want to know the right answers *now*. In order to be a good sponsor today it seems to me that a person should be exceptionally well informed. A lot better informed than ever before.

H. B., West Richfield, Ohio