

June 1957



from the Vintage Years

Thirteen Years Ago . . .

THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE AA GRAPEVINE was published in June of 1944. Those of us who are now functioning as your editors were not around in those far-off days—around AA, that is. We were still in the indoctrination stage. We found so much of interest in those early issues that we decided you might like to explore with us some of our pre-historic past.

There was a war on—remember? And from Naval Cantonment, Honolulu, comes a letter dated Oct. 8, 1943: Dear Sirs—I have been an alcoholic for ten years. Three months ago I went to the hospital for the third time and a nurse told me of your organization. I went to the public library and found your address . . ." This was the beginning of AA in Hawaii. *An Army Lieutenant writes:* "We have arrived at a new island and are set up in a coconut grove. How often these days I think of the fine times in AA and the wonderful people."

A Navy Lieutenant, two years sober, sends word from the South Pacific: "Your mention of John N., the Army lieutenant, caused me to investigate. He was

evacuated and for four months has been only a half mile from my camp." *Bill and Lois took a two-week trip through the South as guests of eight AA groups.* The Miami Herald, according to Bill, divided its front page nearly equally between the war and AA on the day of the meeting; over four hundred people attended. In Birmingham, Alabama, the Mayor, ex-Governor and several members of Congress attended.

AA at Camp Peary, an officer from the base declared at an open meeting in Richmond, already has resulted in much good in its aid to officers trying to solve the problem of Navy men getting drunk on leave and over-staying their liberty.

And from the July 1944 issue . . .

ON CULTIVATING TOLERANCE

By Dr. Bob of Akron

During nine years in AA I have observed that those who follow the AA program with the greatest earnestness and zeal not only maintain sobriety, but often acquire finer characteristics and attitudes as well. One of these is tolerance. Tolerance expresses itself in a variety of ways: in kindness and consideration toward the man or woman who is just beginning the march along the spiritual path; in the understanding of those who perhaps have been less fortunate in educational advantages; and in sympathy toward those whose religious ideas may seem to be at great variance with our own. I am reminded in this connection of the picture of a hub with its radiating spokes. We all start at the outer circumference and approach our destination by one of many routes.

To say that one spoke is much better than all the other spokes is true only in the sense of its being best suited to you as an individual. Human nature is such that without some degree of tolerance each one of us might be inclined to believe that we have found the best or perhaps the shortest spoke. Without some tolerance we might tend to become a bit smug or superior—which of course is not helpful to the person we are trying to help, and may be quite painful or obnoxious to others. No one of us wishes to do anything which might act as a deterrent to the advancement of another, and a patronizing attitude can slow up this process.

Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered to opinions. In other words it often promotes an open-mindedness which is vastly important—in fact a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual.

These, then, are a few of the reasons why an attempt to acquire toler-

ance should be made by each one of us.

With the reprinting of these words by AA's late co-founder in the Grapevine of July, 1944, we are ready to begin a feature that will be continued as long as interest warrants . . . excerpting items, both long and short from the corresponding month of our first year of publication. Herewith, then, is August, 1944 . . .

THE LATE ARTHUR HOPKINS, the famous theatrical producer, visited an AA meeting and wrote an enthusiastic description of his reactions to the Grapevine editors: "There are a few unforgettable experiences that take a permanent place in memory and become a continuing source of enrichment. In recent years the most unforgettable was a meeting at Webster Hall of Alcoholics Anonymous. . . . God was nearer that night than I have ever known Him. He was actually to be seen at work. His ways were not, for that evening, mysterious. His presence shone in many faces. It isn't often we actually meet God."

LIVES AND MAN-HOURS SAVED BY COAST AA. We all know that AA saves lives. But in war time, and in the country that is "the arsenal of democracy," man-hours saved in war industries also save lives—soldiers' lives. The leading newspaper of Richmond, California, ran an editorial about it: "Through the work of a little-known organization, thousands of man-hours and the abilities and self-respect of many men and women employed at the Richmond shipyard are being saved. AA is credited with saving 600,000 man-hours in one year."

ON THE EVE OF D-DAY an Army officer writes from England: "We are pretty tense wondering if and when the big show is going to start . . . Being over here under present circumstances gives you a pretty sharp perception of values. AA has been working without a slip for me. By reading and re-reading the book and holding regular thought sessions with myself, I have been able to compensate for the lack of association and group therapy."

