

June 1944

"GRAPEVINE" IN BOW

In a big smoke-filled room six ink-stained wretches sipped at their Cokes as I shot questions after question at them.

"All right," I said, "The stork didn't bring this paper. Nobody found it in a rose bush. It didn't just grow like Topsy. Come clean, now. How'd it all begin?" "Well," the six began, "It was just something that was in the air. Everybody, at some time or other, has had the bright idea: let's have an A.A. paper! Then - bang - Cleveland had one; so why not us, here in the Metropolitan area? We figured to take the paper out of the talking stage and put it into print." With that the six shut up. In the silence that followed I looked these people over. Very average. A cashier; a radio script writer; an author; a bookseller; an art director; a wife and mother of two. "Do you realize," I said, "that you people are sticking your necks out to here? Starting a paper up all by your little selves. Not putting it to a vote and all that kind of thing." "Sir, we don't think you've got the correct slant," the bookseller said thoughtfully, "We six are just sort of garage mechanics, servicing the paper. We don't write it. That's the creamy part for every Jack and Doris of A.A. who can lay their hands on some news and a pencil stub. We wrestle with the punctuation, if any. Hammer for copy as the deadline creeps up. Paste up the dummy and hope for the best." "Very neat," I said, "and I wish you luck. But what's the paper going to talk about?"

"About us alcoholics, naturally!" the mother of two said, "About A.A.s whole design for living. There's going to be a big, full page on local group doings (there's a *Grapevine* reporter in every group right now with his pencil at the ready). And we're planning to get all the big general stuff on alcoholism into the paper. Best of all, we think, is the Servicemen's Letter page...."

"Now you're talking," I said with satisfaction. "Thanks," the cashier said coldly. "We also hope to have a column on books and the theatre and films and radio and magazine articles which have to do with A.A. or the 12 Steps, or constructive living in general." "And," said the author, "a section called "Do you know?" which will pin down in print the things new members wonder about."

"Anything else?", I asked, reaching for my hat. "Oh yes!," the six said, "Two things, particularly. There'll be a write up on the Central Office. And a letters-to-*The Grapevine* where every body can sound off - pro and con - on anything that seems to need saying out loud."

"That's positively all? I asked, rising. "No! Aren't you going to ask us how long we six are going to stick at this thing?"

"Go on. Go on," I said nervously. "Simple," the six said, "We hang on for a trial spin of three months while the Metropolitan A.A.s make up their minds whether they want a paper or not. If the verdict's NO - we bow out." "And if the verdict's Yes?" , I asked, eyeing all six sharply. "We still bow out; and hand the paper to fresh new blood," they said. "Well, it still looks like a cabal to me," I said in my most suspicious manner. "Think I'll write a letter to *The Grapevine* demanding to know how come you six think you can get a paper going!"

"We'll print it, sir. Goodbye; and kindly don't slam the door," was the last I heard the six say.