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*A Monthly Journal devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, in the hope that it may prove a unifying bond to all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.*

## BILL'S WIFE REMEMBERS WHEN HE AND SHE AND THE FIRST A. A.s WERE VERY YOUNG

As the wife of an early A.A., some of our experiences and my reactions to my husband's changed life may be interesting to other wives. Bill was an alcoholic, I believe, from the first drink he ever took, just a few months before our marriage. From then on, for seventeen years, I did everything I could think of to keep him away from liquor.

I will tell a little of our life before A.A. to help explain some of my later emotions. Bill and I had no children, so I soon felt that my job in life was to help Bill straighten himself out. As time went on, he earnestly tried to stop drinking. He was always very remorseful and perplexed the mornings-after. We would then resolve to lick this liquor situation together, launching off on some new tack.

As his drinking got worse, all decision and responsibility had to be taken by me. It was lucky that we were companionable, for gradually as our social contacts were broken we were thrust back on each other for company. In order to get away from alcohol over the week ends, I used to engineer some sort of outing, as we both loved the outdoors. If our pocketbook was flat, we might take the subway to the Dyckman Street ferry and hike along the Palisades to some scenic spot where we would nibble our sandwiches and gaze at the view. Or we might ferry to Staten Island and walk there; perhaps broiling a steak over a campfire. We have hired a rowboat at Yonkers and, using a bathtowel as a sail, floated up the Hudson, to a spit of land near Nyack, where we camped and tried to sleep. We once went so far to get away from alcohol that we both gave up our jobs and took a whole year off. This we spent motorcycling and camping over half the United States.

These trips, although good for Bill's health,

did nothing towards his permanent sobriety. In fact, his alcoholism grew steadily more serious. He lost job after job until I became entirely hopeless about him.

And then suddenly and finally Bill straightened out through the help of an old friend. At once I was convinced of his complete change and was of course extremely happy. Bill began to go to religious meetings and to work feverishly with alcoholics. I would go to meetings too and would try to share his newfound enthusiasms. He always had some drunk in tow and would work all night or get up in the middle of the night to go to the suburbs if one called him. We had drunks all over the house; sometimes as many as five lived there at one time.

One drunk committed suicide in the house after having sold about 700 dollars worth of our clothes and luggage. Another slid down the coal chute from the street to the cellar when we refused him the front door. Two others took to fighting, and one chased the other all around the house with a carving knife. The intended victim was saved by a third drunk, who delivered the knife-minded one a knockout blow. An alcoholic who was living in the basement was invited up for a pancake breakfast. After eating his share, he suddenly put on his hat and started out of the door remarking that he was going to Childs for PLENTY of pancakes.

Bill had found himself a job about this time; and it used to take him away from home a great deal and I was left with one or more alcoholics to look after. Once one of these, boys lay in the vestibule all night and screamed invectives at me because I would not let him in. He was so loud the passers-by all stopped, looked and listened. Another time it

was 4 a.m. before I succeeded in towing a drunk home. He was anxious to be at his job the next morning and we had gone out around midnight to look for a doctor, having been unable to get one to come to the house at that hour. I helped his shaky steps up and down stoops, lit his cigarettes for him and finally, when we could not rouse a doctor, held a drink to his lips in a bar. When I asked him how he then felt he said, "Well, a bird can't fly on one wing." After a few more drinks I managed to get him home, but he did not get to his job the next morning. I was once suddenly taken sick, and when my sister arrived to nurse me she found five men milling around in the living room, one of them muttering, "One woman can look after five drunks but five drunks cannot look after one woman." Now to describe my reactions to it all. When Bill first sobered up I was terribly happy but soon, without my realizing it, I began to resent the fact that Bill and I never spent any time together any more. I stayed at home while he went off somewhere scouting up new drunks or working with old ones. My life's job of sobering up Bill with all its former responsibilities was suddenly taken away from me. I had not yet found anything to fill the void. And then there was the feeling of being on the outside of a very tight little clique of alcoholics into which no mere wife could possibly enter. I did not understand what was going on within myself until one Sunday, Bill asked me to go with him to a meeting. To my own surprise as well as his I burst forth with, "Damn all your meetings," and threw my shoe at him as hard as I could.

This bad display of temper woke me up. I realized that I had been wallowing in self pity; that Bill's change was simply miraculous; that his feverish activity with alcoholics was absolutely necessary to his sobriety; and that if I did not want to be left way behind I had better jump on the bandwagon, too!

Bill's wife, Lois Wilson

# EDITORIAL:

## On the 2nd Step

Having taken the First Step of the A.A. program by admitting that we were powerless over alcohol, we were confronted with Step Two: "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

This Second Step is often referred to as the first spiritual step; but is it or the subsequent steps any more spiritual than Step One? Is not anything spiritual which tends toward elevating us to the best and highest type of human being we are capable of becoming?

The Second Step contains the crux of the A.A. method of getting well: it shows us how to expel that little streak of insanity which caused so many relapses into debauchery long after the normal drinker would have shrunk from another drink. This twisted kind of thinking is eliminated by faith in a Power greater than ourselves.

The question which naturally arises in the newcomer's mind is: "How can I acquire enough faith to get well?" The road to faith is by taking all Twelve Steps. Faith is acquired by working for it; it is retained by continuous use of the Twelve Steps.

One who has gained faith in this greater Power finds such faith reflected toward himself. To the alcoholic this means faith that he will not take the first, fatal drink. But that is not all, for soon we learn that in some mysterious way our whole lives have been changed, our thinking changed, and our desires as well. Finally the realization comes that we no longer drink—because we just don't want to.

The greater Power now becomes for us the court of final appeal. Those harsh judgments of people, conditions, and so on, which *we* made in the past are now left to this court. This is the way to tolerance. Our own ideals, aims and ambitions are also submitted. This leads to progress, and it is by progressing that we become—and remain—well.

Horace C.

## Points of View

*Dear Grapevine:* You have asked me to write a little piece on How it Feels to be the Mother of an Alcoholic. I have been one for so many years that it is difficult to remember anything particularly unusual about the feeling.

For indeed . . . again and again to paraphrase McLeish, Alcoholics are Promises . . . "Springs to catch woodcocks!"; the wonder boys and girls for whom no bell of reckoning ever tolls . . . unless of course the picture is seen through the looking-glass where seven impossible things are imagined before breakfast. The darling did not steal or lie or bring

all the strange matters of police, psychopathic wards, State Mental Hospitals to the way life happened every day. . . . No, of course not. The boy is ill . . . at last everything is so clear in this looking-glass world. . . . For mothers with private fortunes, there are the great private sanitariums and the long expenses to ease the cause of unhealth. . . . For mothers without funds . . . dear reader, I should know. Perhaps it seems less a matter of illness than character . . . that funny old-fashioned word. . . .

Jellinek, the most misquoted man in the world

. . . seems to highlight my maternal point of view when he writes. . . . "Stupid drinkers are the feeble-minded individuals who drink because they cannot resist temptation and because they cannot rise to any higher form of recreation than the passive one of intoxication." . . .\*

Because I cannot afford a private illness . . . because I have looked into that strange wonderland where my alcoholic son tries to stumble up the endless steps that seem two forward and three back, I can help him and myself by repealing . . . "the poor lad is ill". . . . But is he?

Mother of "J."

*Dear Mother of "J.":* I cannot tell how poignantly I am stirred by the letter you wrote *The Grapevine* about your alcoholic son.

Just ten years ago my own mother, after years of frantic bewilderment, lost hope. Long a chronic problem drinker, I had come to the jumping-off place. A very good doctor had

(Continued on page 3)

\* [EDITOR'S NOTE: Alas, Mother of "J." has ripped Dr. Jellinek's quotation out of context—perhaps a worse distortion than misquoting. Below is the complete section, (as it stands in "Alcohol Explored"):

"All intemperate drinkers whose behavior is definitely affected by frequent intoxication are classed here as the *inebriates*, and they, in turn, are divided into *normal excessive drinkers*, *symptomatic drinkers*, *stupid drinkers*, and *addicts*. The motivation of the normal excessive drinker may be nothing more than recklessness, exuberance, or mistaken good fellowship. Many are individuals of high alcohol tolerance who could stop, but do not, merely because there seems to be no reason to do so.

"*Symptomatic drinkers*, of whom we shall have much to say in the chapter on mental diseases, are those unfortunates whose excessive use of alcohol results from a disturbed mental state.

"*Stupid drinkers* are the feeble-minded individuals who drink because they cannot resist temptation and because they cannot rise to any higher form of recreation than the passive one of intoxication.

"In ordinary conversation the expression 'addict' is not a common one and, when it is used, is often misapplied to anyone who drinks frequently or who is especially fond of alcoholic beverages. In reality, true addicts may not like alcohol; it may be actually distasteful to them. The feature that makes them addicts is their inability to live their normal lives except when intoxicated. It is in the matter of adjustment that the medical and psychological use of the term is applied. Thus Cimbal, a Continental authority on inebriety, said: 'It is not the habit of using alcoholic drinks which makes for alcohol addiction, but rather the craving for intoxication, that is, the inability to achieve the psychological contents necessary for harmonic living through anything else but intoxicants.' An American authority on this question, Strecker, stated that the border line between normal drinking and addiction is crossed when alcohol is called in as an aid to adjust oneself to reality. Bowman and Jellinek have epitomized the thought of numerous writers on the question as follows: *An alcohol addict is a person with 'an uncontrollable craving for alcohol. The outstanding criterion is the inability to break with the habit. Alcohol serves the purpose of creating an artificial social adjustment.'*"

## Points of View...

(Continued from page 2)

pronounced the grim sentence: "Obsessive drinker, deteriorating rapidly—hopeless."

The doctor used to talk about my case somewhat like this: "Yes, Bill has underlying personality defects . . . great emotional sensitivity, childishness and inferiority.

"This very real feeling of inferiority is magnified by his childish sensitivity and it is this state of affairs which generates in him that insatiable, abnormal craving for self approval and success in the eyes of the world. Still a child, he cries for the moon. And the moon, it seems, won't have him!

"Discovering alcohol, he found much more in it than do normal folks. To him alcohol is no mere relaxation; it means release—release from inner conflict. It seems to set his troubled spirit free."

The doctor would then go on, "Seen this way, we normal people can picture how such a compulsive habit can become a real obsession; as indeed it has, in Bill's case. Once he arrived at the obsession point, alcohol overshadows all else. Hence he now appears utterly selfish. And Immoral. He will lie, cheat, steal or what have you, to serve his drinking ends. Of course those about him are shocked and dismayed because they think his actions are willful. But that's far from being so. The real picture of Bill is that of a bankrupt idealist; one who has gone broke on vain, childish dreams of perfection and power. Victimized now by his obsession, he is a little boy crying alone in a dark strange room; waiting agonized for mother—or God—to come and light a candle."

I must confess, Mother of "J.," that I may have put some of these words into the doctor's mouth. But that's the alcoholic's life as I have lived it.

Did I, an alcoholic, have a defective character? Of course I did. Was I, an alcoholic, also a sick man? Yes, very.

To what extent I was personally responsible for my drinking, I don't know. Yet I'm not one to take complete refuge in the idea that I was a sick man only. In earlier years I certainly had some degree of free will. That free will I used badly, to the great misery of my mother and countless others. I am deeply ashamed.

As one who knows me a little, you may have heard how, ten years ago, a friend, himself a liberated alcoholic, came to me bearing *the light* which finally led me out of the toils.

There will come a day like that for you and yours—I'm so confident!

As ever, *Bill W.*

## THE BURNING BABE

*As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,  
Surprised I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow;*

*And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,  
A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear,*

*Who scorched with excessive heat such floods of tears did shed,  
As though his floods should quench his flames which with  
his tears were fed.*

*"Alas!" quoth he, "but newly born in fiery heats, I fry,  
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!*

*My faultless heart the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns;  
Love is the fire and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;*

*The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals;  
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls;*

*For which, as now on fire I am, to work them to their good,  
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."*

*With that he vanished out of sight and swiftly shrunk away;  
And straightway I called into mind that it was Christmas Day.*

Robert Southwell (1561-1595)

## A FATHER LOOKS THROUGH HIS SON'S EYES

If we non-alcoholics, who have seen this alcoholic disease take possession of one who is dear to us, could change places with the alcoholic and through his eyes get his outlook on life, I believe we would be appalled. If we could feel ourselves slipping away from everything that to us seems worthwhile—if we had become dishonest—if we had come to lying and cheating and stealing; if, as from afar through the haze, we could see our lives disintegrating, although those nearest and dearest to us tried to plead and reason, tried to save us—and steadily, unrelentingly, the mist thickened into fog, and through the fog we watched other people going about their daily routine, doing their jobs with disgusting regularity, while in the distance our homes and our families moved away, away, continually away until they were gone, completely gone; if we could know the all-aloneness of the alcoholic then, I think we might begin to understand how sick, mentally and physically he is.

It goes without saying that we non-alcoholics want to be of help, but always our attempts seem to end up with the alcoholic drunk, for he, alarmed by his own behavior, has surrounded himself with a wall of self-justification behind which he takes refuge, and every effort we make to be of help is, in his eyes, simply an assault upon his only defense, is it any wonder then that we fail to get his cooperation, when to cooperate would be to help us tear down that defense? Is it any wonder he gets drunk?

There is one thing we can do, however, and that is to avail ourselves of the same help we ask him to accept from the Power greater than himself. We can, by the acceptance of that help, bring to order all those disturbing influences which have brought discord into our own lives. I say that fully realizing that we can never find peace and happiness until our particular alcoholic finds sobriety.

Bill S.'s father, *Wally*

# THE CHILDREN SAY WHAT A.A. MEANS TO THEM

## *A.A. Showed My Father the Door to Maturity . . .*

Six years ago my father called my brother and me into the living room to give us one of his few and scattered "lectures." However, the contents of his dreaded speech were far from what we expected. They were, in fact, a confession and a pledge to us. While we sat there in silence, he told us how selfish he had been in using liquor to such an extreme that he had hurt his family and his friends. Then he promised us that he would never drink again, and he has kept his word. At the time I was too young to understand the whole significance of what my father had done, but I did know that his growing "weakness" had made me and the rest of my family unhappy. I was at the age when my environment made deep impressions with little meaning, and I felt, though I did not know why, that my father had just defeated a cancerous evil in himself which, had it not been defeated, would eventually have been disastrous to the entire family. As the years went by, I began to understand the meaning of my father's victory more and more. Actually, he was growing up with me, and as a result of this we could talk to each other with ease. He told me of the strength in faith, the power in humility, and the happiness in helping others. As I was growing up with him, likewise he was growing up with that which had shown him the door to maturity—Alcoholics Anonymous.

Today I believe that I understand the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and I also believe that through it I have received great values. I have often regretted that other boys of my age could not be exposed to this movement as I have. It seems to me that, if this were possible, they could not only keep themselves safe from alcoholism but that they could also find in A.A. a finer understanding of life itself that would enable them to live it more fully.

Bert T.'s 18-year-old son, *Alan*

## *I Hate to Think Where Mother Would Be . . .*

The first time I encountered Mother under the influence of liquor (and I do mean influence), I was rather taken aback by the surprised shock I received at discovering her in such a stew. I had heard vaguely of people getting drunk, but never had I dreamt of my sweet Mother in such disgrace. I soon found this first shock to be only the beginning of the

end. After a while, I became shock-proof, and my Mother drunk was second nature to me. Without her so, life and the home would have been extremely dull, and out of place. One fine day, Mother announced that never again would she hit the bottle. I laughed up my sleeve at her and said, "Really, Mother, and just where have I heard that before?" But she insisted firmly "that I was just to wait and see if she didn't." Well, I waited and I see that she didn't, all right. Ah me! I do hate to think where Mother would be now, had she not discovered A.A. (or A.A. had not discovered her) when she did. It's a wonderful thing, A.A., and I can't begin to express my gratitude for saving both our lives.

Felicia G.'s 17-year-old daughter, *Ellen*

## *A.A.s Make Wonderful Fathers . . .*

I am an alcoholic's daughter. I think what I missed most in my childhood was a feeling of security. A child needs to feel that home is always the same, always a place to bring friends and always a place of strength on which she can rely. Her father should be to her a paragon of virtue. Father's the man of whom mother is always considerate, and the person the child must respect and please. But you all know that the home of an alcoholic is not like this at all. It's an awful strain on a child to know that her father is not like other fathers, that she can't bring other children home because Dad might be light. I also remember how afraid of Dad I was when he was drunk.

Mom handled our problem in the best way I can imagine. When Dad would come home tight, she and I would discuss very seriously whether we should leave for a trip this time or wait until the next time. And when we would go, we'd have a wonderful time at my Grandmother's or at a hotel in New York City. I must confess that when life was running too smoothly at home, sometimes I'd wish that Dad would go on a binge, so Mom and I could have a vacation.

Even though we treated it as a lark, there were times when I was very much ashamed and very unhappy and insecure.

I had just started high school and none of my friends knew—. I was panicky for fear that they would find out as my other friends had learned it—Dad turning up when he shouldn't have. Then came A.A.!! At first Dad didn't want to tell me about it. That was odd, since I'd known about the drinking. But one day he explained the whole idea. You can't imagine

the hope, the relief. And as months went by and no slips—security came.

But more than just not drinking, Dad and I began to get acquainted, to talk to each other. He was relaxed and happy. He seemed to expand. These A.A.s make wonderful fathers, because they've been through the mill and they *understand*. And a girl without any brothers needs an understanding man to get the masculine slant on things.

Home is regular now. I know there will be no more melancholia, and home is as strong and solid as a rock. I've heard A.A.s say that the program means a new way of life for them. It means the same thing to their children.

Ed F.'s 18-year-old daughter, *Joan*

## *What Could These A.A.s Do For Mother . . . ?*

Two years ago, Alcoholics Anonymous didn't mean a thing to me. Now, A.A. means the fulfillment of countless prayers, the assurance of family life, and most of all, freedom from doubt and suspicion inside the home.

Before its appearance on the scene, things were in a pretty wretched state for Mother. She'd been growing worse as the years went by, and there was no apparent hope for the future. The family was exhausted from a ten-year struggle with the problem, and was ready to admit that the case was a hopeless one.

Then, when hope and courage were at their lowest ebb, when faith had hit rock bottom, the time was perfect for a miracle. And that miracle came in the form of a group of men and women who gave of themselves unsparingly, who labored to save others from the fate that they themselves had so narrowly escaped. At first we were skeptical. What could these people do for Mother that we hadn't already tried? I know my feelings bordered on annoyance and even jealousy. The case was hopeless, we knew that, and had proved it. So why did these people want to try and prove us wrong? But within a few short months, I was happy and proud to admit my error. The miracle had come, and all the family snarls and tangles were coming undone. True, although Mother stopped drinking completely, the road was still long and things were: still shaky and indecisive, but they were definitely on the mend, and once started, Alcoholics Anonymous couldn't be stopped until the goal had been reached.

Marian M.'s 16-year-old son, *Peter*  
(Continued on page 8)

# Mail Call for All A. A.s in the Armed Forces

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*Our mail from A.A.s in the armed forces comes from all corners of the globe and has been particularly gratifying. The Grapevine sends to all members in Service its Christmas greetings and the fervent wish that soon they may be with us again in person as they so obviously are in spirit. If we have helped one individual A.A., as the following letter seems to indicate, we feel that our efforts have been more than justified:*

"Dear Friend:—And I do think of *The Grapevine* as a friend—three cheers for it and the idea that brought it into being. After fourteen months in the E.T.O. and not another A.A. in sight, the old beam has not burned too brightly at times. Now with our own publication serving us as something of a link with you people back there and a friendly little get-together on paper, it is my belief that our thought processes won't be so sluggish and we A.A.s will have a better chance of taking up where we left off without passing through little Hell again. I could appreciate with ease the experience of the officer in the October issue. His arguments and alibis for a bit of pub crawling might have been lifted in full from recent activities of my own. As he said, a man can carry on alone and stay 'dry,' but it's not so easy as when you had your group all going in the same direction. You have to put more thought into your efforts or the first thing you know you'll be draped over a bar with only its early closing hour and shortage in spirits between you and a royal binge—and that isn't just scuttle butt. So thanks a million for *Grapevine*. It will be a lift, and may hit on a date when you need it most. Maybe some day we can make it a weekly."

*Hugh P., SF 1/c—British Isles, October 20th*  
[A weekly? Sailor, you don't know what you're asking!]

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## TENTING ON PELELIU ISLAND

"Received your letter a couple of days back and I'll try to give you a little dope now. Our life is improving somewhat around here; when one stops to consider that everything has to come in by ship over thousands of miles of water, these guys certainly do a good job. We even have showers now in our area but most of the men are still living without tents. I managed to chisel a tent from a guy on about D+5 so I have been comparatively well off. The only complaint I have is the number of gents who cut themselves in as partners. Seven men sleeping and living in one tent reminds me of a 1 and ½ room apartment with

about ten drunks sleeping overnight! Guess you probably get the picture. Personally, I would much rather have a shower than a tent. You nearly go crazy being so dirty for so many days with absolutely no facilities. However, one manages, and lots of things that happen would be really very humorous if things were not quite so serious. I feel fine and missed getting the spell of malaria I rather expected. This is the hottest and wettest of the Islands, as far as I know. The only saving grace is the wonderful drainage, due to the coral formation. Under cruise ship conditions, these Islands would be interesting to visit, but see that you miss all D Days! They 'ain't' good! Thanks for your letters. It brings me some closer to the group to hear about it and maybe

someday I can get back to pick up where I stopped. Remember me to everyone.

Sincerely, John N., U.S. Army."

*Some weeks later, bound for a new destination, the same correspondent wrote us further of his adventures, stating:*

"I have often thought how much better I am prepared for all these mixups by having a little of the A.A. doctrine. This is strictly a business where one is able to change some things but, in the main, it is just a matter of standing whatever is passed out."

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## SERVICE PAPER INTERESTED IN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

*Italy, October 6, 1944*

"Dear Marty: I have enclosed a clipping from our Service Paper (*Stars & Stripes*, Mediterranean edition). I hope it's the first 'clipping service' from this part of the world with regard to your newest endeavor in the field of alcoholism. I know it won't be the last.

Your new work is something in which I absolutely believe, and of which I have thought constantly. I intend to spend as much of my time as I can possibly give, along those same lines, as soon as I am returned to civilian life. I intend to follow your 'lead' over here by contacting the Editor of the *Stars & Stripes* and offering myself as a *bona fide* alcoholic, a three-star example of an ex-rummy, with the ultimate purpose of contacting alcoholics in this sector who may have read the article and would like to do something about it. I have some A.A. literature with me, and will be able to tell them whom to contact for added information, and where to go when they hit the States. If, in this way, I could help one man, I would consider the effort a success.

I wish to extend the greatest possible good luck to your new educational program. I know it will succeed and grow, and eventually prove that alcoholism and alcoholics are what we believe they are, and that therefore they should be given consideration in any public social problem work. Sincerely, *Harold M.*"

[A recent letter from Sergeant Hugh B., from England, also mentions that the *Stars & Stripes*, European edition, reported the move to organize the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism.]

# *The Pleasures of Reading*

So much that is unnecessarily redundant and uselessly axiomatic has been published in the broad field of psychological analysis in the last years, that it is both a relief and a shock to run into something like William Steig's books: *The Lonely Ones*, *All Embarrassed*, and *About People*. (Duell, Sloan and Pearce; 1.00, 2.00, 1.50)

Technically speaking, these are collections of cartoons, but they seem rather to be the development of a new form of satirical analysis, both psychological and sociological. They cannot be classified more definitely than as critiques of man's mental attitudes, his pretenses, and his hopeless self-obsessions. Drawn with a caustic economy of line, they are charged with sarcasm and a kind of derisive understanding. Their frankness and cruelty are frightening.

Although each book limits itself according to its title, they could all be called *About People*. Titles of pictures such as "I'm Blameless," "My Troubles are Purely Psychic," "Man who wants to be Pitied," and "Man Being Kiddled" figure along with drawings of the conscious and unconscious states of fear, nerves, amnesia, hypochondria, and embarrassment. The drawings are of recognizable human figures, but the technique is that of the X-ray and microscope combined, and the minute details of every falseness and fault are brought out.

Mr. Steig refuses to take any of these mental states with the seriousness their owners demand, and only those not too closely allied with your own personality inspire real laughter. The others hurt. Their only saving grace lies in the strange understanding which Steig is able to give them—the only sympathy evident anywhere in the three books.

The criticisms implied in every line of his drawings are valid ones, too valid for comfort. They are the graphic proof of the overworked saying that a sense of humor is the sense of proportion necessary for the cure of most of men's difficulties that arise from too much introspection.

Mr. Steig is truly a genius. But it is not in art that he is great. Rather it is from his understanding of people, and his passion for truth and honesty in the smallest detail of life that he derives his cruel magnificence. None of his readers can fail to be both destroyed and recreated by his work.

Grace O.'s 18-year-old daughter, *April*

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*Alcoholics Anonymous* (Works Publishing Co., Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y., 3.50).

## THE NEW YORK PRESS REPORTS A. A. DINNER

*From the N. Y. World-Telegram:*

Fifteen hundred people, most of them former drunks, assembled last night at the Hotel Commodore to celebrate the 10th anniversary

of the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous, and it was as humbling and as wholesome as a walk in the open fields at twilight . . .

(Continued on page 8)

## TIME ON *our* HANDS

Here I am, back at last, where I've wanted to be for a long time—in front of a modeling stand with a lump of clay in my hands. It was a long, long time ago that I modeled and cast my first figure, Fanny Flatbottom.

My next achievement was a delicate if somewhat erotic ashtray—a figure of Pan holding aloft a slender nymph on his shoulders. One day when we were packing up to move to the mountains, my wife, teetering along the edge of the staircase in her preoccupied way, flew off into space, and I found her at the bottom of the stairs where she and Pan were gazing bemusedly at the clay remnants of the once-lovely nymph. The episode was probably symbolic, because that marked the crash, too, of all my dreams of becoming a sculptor. For it was about that time that my wife crossed over the borderline from a gay drinking companion into a strange alien person living in a world of her own. In the years that followed we moved many times, and wherever we went, Fanny Flatbottom, a little chipped and a trifle cracked, moved along with us, a dusty epitaph to my buried ambition.

Then came A.A. and I found myself to my amazement with a completely sober wife. I watched with joy and a great deal of pride as she again approached some real contact with life, and began to make dates and go places on her own initiative.

But after my first enthusiasm at seeing her build a new life for herself began to wear off, I found myself with many lonely evenings. I had to find something to absorb me as her new A.A. interests were absorbing her. My wife had, by a happy miracle, been given back her life to live as she wished to live it. But by the same token I, too, received my freedom to chose what / wished to do.

One winter evening I suddenly came across my dusty Fanny. Although she was without a head, she called out to me with a siren song, and although without arms, she gripped me tight. Ah! here it was—the old romance, a companion, and a fascinating one, to fill my evenings. So here I am again before my modeling stand with my hands deep in wet clay, and completely happy. That strange interlude—the fifteen years of my wife's alcoholism—seem very dim and remote. Only the present is real and full of awareness. And Fanny Flatbottom, like an alcoholic, is touched lightly by the years. She thinks it was only yesterday that I put her away in a dusty closet. And I like to think of it as only yesterday, too.

Kay M.'s husband, *Bob*

# ALONG THE METROPOLITAN CIRCUIT

**BERGEN COUNTY STRIDES FORWARD . . .** Greatly increased membership has made larger meeting quarters imperative. Donald Borg, Editor of *The Bergen Evening Record*, again came to our rescue. Meetings will be held in a spacious wing of the Hackensack Civilian Defense Centre, as soon as renovations are completed. Rent free. Borg interceded for us with the Hackensack City Manager. As a result of his intercession we are now proteges not only of the city but of the entire county. This is another indication of the recognition that is being given throughout the country to A.A.—and to the understanding that alcoholism is a public health problem. . . . We owe a debt to the public-spirited men and women who are helping A.A. groups and are working toward intelligent education of non-alcoholics on the subject of alcoholism.

**BROOKLYN GROUP LUNCHING . . .** Every Thursday at 12:15 p.m., we get together for luncheon in the Coffee Shop of the Hotel St. George, Brooklyn. Like all the other groups, ours, too, is growing rapidly. Our mailing address is still: P.O. Box 91, Brooklyn, N. Y.

**THE BRONX "COMBAT TEAMS" . . .** We have evolved a 12th-step-work procedure of our own: a couple of old-timers, together with one or two newcomers, visit prospects. In this way the new members quickly learn the method of working with prospects; in no time at all the older members are sitting back and listening to the newer ones take over. Our "combat teams" are bringing great results, for our membership is growing by leaps and bounds. . . . Also, recent publicity of our Group activity in *The Bronx Home News* has brought in quite a number of new people. . . . We meet Wednesdays, 8:15 p.m., at 2500 Marion Avenue, Bronx, just off East Fordham Road.

**EAST ORANGE GOES CHINESE . . .** Our meeting room at 507 Main Street being unavailable the second Wednesday of each month, we are having dinner, followed by a meeting, at the local *Cantonese* on those evenings. . . . Hal R.'s role as Financial Secretary of the new clubhouse in Newark, N. J. is keeping him so busy that he doesn't have much time left for extra-curricular activity.

**FLUSHING IS HOST TO MANY . . .** Our Group was host to over 100 A.A.s at the Manhattan clubhouse, 334½ W. 24th Street, November 11th. It was quite a jam-session—but lots of fun, besides serving to get people acquainted with each other. . . . We were guests at Paterson, N. J., November 14th, where we conducted a well-attended meeting. . . . New members are coming in in droves.

**FOREST HILLS SPEAKS AT FORUM . . .** Upon the request of the pastor of "All Angels" Church, West 80th Street, several of our

Group recently spoke at a Sunday Forum there — thus spreading to non-alcoholics the word of A.A. and an understanding of the disease, alcoholism. . . . We agree entirely with the newspapermen who, in writing of the 10th Anniversary A.A. dinner, spoke of our member, Mary C., as a young woman of "great charm and wit." . . . Maybelle G., attending a meeting of the Norwalk, Conn. Group a short while ago, was delighted to note a big jump in membership. . . . Bob M., who used to be a constructive part of our Forest Hills Group and now is a member of Mount Vernon, gave us a very enlightening talk, shortly after his first A.A. anniversary.

**IRVINGTON SENDS GREETINGS . . .** As a fairly new group in New Jersey—one of many such springing up all around us — we wish to send our best wishes for the New Year to all A.A.s everywhere. . . . Two members who strayed away for a time are now back with us, and this time we think they're here to stay. So do they.

**MANHATTAN HAPPENINGS?! . . .** At a recent Manhattan business meeting there was talk of the Manhattan Group renting or buying a new clubhouse of its own. Some of the outlying groups seemed to want to share as co-owners of said clubhouse, whenever rented or purchased. But the consensus among the Manhattanites was that their group should be the sole owner, thus avoiding entanglements in policy, etc., that might very likely ensue, if the as yet hypothetical new clubhouse were owned by other groups as well. Of course, when the Manhattan Group does get a clubhouse of its own, every A.A., regardless of what group he belongs to, shall be welcome at all times. . . . Charlie H., who was appointed to head a Program Committee, has already begun closed meetings for newcomers only—upstairs in the club, at 7:45 p.m. Thursdays. These new members descend to the larger closed meeting downstairs, beginning at 8:30. . . . Olive O., lying ill with a cardiac disturbance in St. Luke's Hospital, was responsible for the furtherance of A.A. among doctors. Olive talked so much and so well to Dr. Dwight Griswold of the hospital staff about A.A. that he gladly accepted an invitation to the 10th Anniversary A.A. dinner at the Commodore Hotel, November 8th. Dr. Griswold was so tremendously impressed that he chose A.A. as the subject of the paper he was going to read before the New York County Medical Association.

**MOUNT VERNON INVITES DOCTORS . . .** By having as our guests several doctors from the Westchester County Psychiatric Hospital at the 10th Anniversary A.A. dinner, we are increasing the interest, respect, and cooperation of the public authorities toward A.A. This is an important step in our endeavor to impart

to the authorities a better knowledge of alcoholism, and of the treatment of alcoholics—especially the police court cases.

**MONTCLAIR BOOMING . . .** In line with other changes in organization, we have a new treasurer, Van V. Van replaces Harry C., who did a swell job for us during his 8 months in office. . . . Harold S., in his travels last month, went to an A.A. meeting in Chicago, where he encountered, along with old-timers he has known, flocks of new people. . . . Plainfield (N.J.) gave us a pair of fine speakers and a generous delegation of visitors on November 12th, a return engagement being kept by our Group the following week. . . . We are going great guns in Montclair nowadays.

**NORTH JERSEY GROUPS . . .** Don L. and Ed E., from the Orange Group, visited our new A.A. clubhouse in Newark last month and brought with them subscriptions to the club from over 90 per cent of its members. That's what we call cooperation. . . . On November 29th the Elizabeth Group, having outgrown its former meeting place, had its first meeting in its new quarters at the Elizabeth Country Club. They are planning for the near future a get-together with all the civic leaders and welfare workers of the county. . . . As proof that they grow 'em rugged in Elizabeth, Jack E. is out of the hospital with a hemstitched front, and just as good as new. . . . The Kearny Group is going strong. Their member, Tom C., is on the Board of Trustees for the new club. . . . Betty B. of the Plainfield Group has started a closed meeting for women only, at her home, and it seems to be going over the top.

**WHITE PLAINS AND PEEKSKILL . . .** The Peekskill boys, after 7 months of regular attendance at the White Plains gatherings, opened their own show on November 16th, at the Peekskill Y.M.C.A., on Main Street. They have stirred up an amazing amount of civic interest in their town and have the city officials—from the mayor down—in their pockets. While we don't like to lose such hard-working members, we are nonetheless happy to see another group get under way, and are proud of the progress of our pals from upper Westchester. . . . Although the quality of our A.A. gal guzzlers out here has been high, the quantity has been low. The few available women have been kept busy making calls — when gasoline allowed—and spending much time on the telephone trying to wring out the still damp dames by remote control. But recently we have had a phenomenal influx of women, due in part no doubt to the great amount of excellent newspaper publicity that A.A. has been having recently. . . . Our address is the Westchester Republican Headquarters, Mamaroneek and Marline Avenues, White Plains, N. Y. Meetings: Wednesday at 8:30 p.m.

(Continued from page 4)

### *We With A.A., Parents Are the Lucky Ones . . .*

Ever since I can remember there has been a lot of drinking around me. Looking back on it, I can see that most of the people who did that drinking were alcoholics. I can't say that it bothered me much until I was older and began to notice what was happening to the people I loved. They were changing under my very eyes. This change was probably gradual, but to me it seemed to come all of a sudden and I can remember hating what alcohol did to people and even hating the sight of it. It was a joyful day when I found Mummy wasn't drinking. That summer was one of the happiest I had ever had, but even then, hearing about A.A. and seeing the great change in Mummy and the peace and comfort it brought her, I didn't realize how much it was going to mean to me. I shall skip over what it has done for her because that can be told by any A.A. who has followed the program heart and soul as she has, and go on to what it has done for me.

I became engaged the summer before we were involved in war. I was blissfully happy. Then came the war, which brought with it three hectic years of upset plans, disappointments, and separations. Finally our much postponed wedding took place on a twelve-hour pass, and we had short week ends together with long weeks between. Then a baby was coming and we were again separated. After the baby arrived, there was a twelve-day leave and again, a separation. Through all of this the threat of P.O.E. hung over our heads like the sword of Damocles. It takes a short time to tell this, but spread over three years it can be pretty wearing. I was lucky, however, because, unlike most young people, I had something to help me over the rough spots—A.A. Every

time a crisis would arise I would find the answer at an A.A. meeting. There I learned to "accept the things I could not change" and found a philosophy and way of life ready-made for me and waiting for *anyone*, not just the alcoholic. I didn't go to the meetings out of curiosity or to watch my mother. I went because I had seen it *work* for her and I wanted to be able to face life and my problems with some of the courage and serenity she and other A.A.s had.

My war-born troubles are not unique. All of the youth of today are confronted with abnormal situations for which our early training has not prepared us. We, with A.A. parents, are the lucky ones. A.A. can be our life-raft, equipped as it is with the necessary things to carry us over the stormy ocean of our times. . . .

A.A. has not taken my troubles and problems away, but has taught me how to handle them. It has made me more tolerant and understanding and my many resentments have flown out of the window—well—all but one. No matter how regularly I attend meetings, no matter how avidly I follow the principles of the Twelve Steps, alas and alack, I can never be a full-fledged member.

Lois B.'s 22-year-old daughter, *Delphine*

### *I Didn't Think You A.A.s Could Do Him Much Good . . .*

This is a plug for A.A. from the stepson of one of your members who has been 'dry,' and I mean 'dry'—no slip-ups—for the past three and a half years, one hundred percent thanks to your organization and the work he has done with you. It is a very heartfelt plug because not only has he been 'dry,' but he's been a guy I'm pretty fond of. As such he hadn't been much in evidence during the last year or so before you got hold of him.

I'm not going to say much about that last year or so. You all know many versions of the same story—some of you have undoubtedly heard his—and if I were to go into the gory details I'd begin to sound like something out of "The Face On The Barroom Floor." Suffice it to say that the details were gory. Suffice it to say that if ever mortal man had come to the point where he was ruled body and soul by the old hair tonic, my stepfather was in those merry days.

It didn't look as though much could be done about it, either. When a man gets to the point where he not only thinks he can't lick something but isn't interested in trying, he is about ready to throw in the sponge. To make a long story short, that is exactly what he ended by doing—complete with the usual dramatics,

finally necessitating the calling of the strong-arm boys and their little wagon. That was where A.A. came in.

Quite frankly I didn't think you could do him much good. But since, although I have visited a couple of your sessions, I have needed no other evidence than what you have done for him to become convinced of the power of the faith you instill where faith has been completely lost. It is a great job you are doing and have done.

Yours is the first profoundly sensible step in the solution of an age-old problem that has been systematically bungled for generations. And I know there will be more and more as time goes on who, like me, have the deepest reasons to be grateful.

Abbot T.'s stepson, *Lt. Richard H.*

### NEW YORK PRESS REPORTS . . .

(Continued from page 6)

. . . One of the member speakers was an extraordinarily attractive young woman who spoke with the frankness of sunlight and whose wit and philosophy could only have derived from a terrible mental experience.

. . . She told of her addiction to alcohol when she was 17—"because I was shy and unsure of myself"—and one felt at first as she began her story like a violator of the confessional until realization came that here was the courage of truth, and the acceptance of realities, which is the first lesson of an alcoholic on the road to reform. . . .

*From the N. Y. Daily News:*

... Chief address of the evening was by Fulton Oursler, senior editor of *Reader's Digest* and radio commentator. He likened A.A. to "the mighty Allied army which at this moment is ending the binge upon which Nazi Germany had set out." . . .

*From the N. Y. Herald Tribune:*

. . . The report, which the founder delivered on Alcoholics Anonymous's ten-year history was impressive. In its first year, he said, only fifteen alcoholics were "released" from the drinking habit. After three years there were forty "conversions." At the end of four years the total was only 100. But after ten years there are more than 12,000 members in more than 370 groups throughout the United States and Canada, and a new unit is functioning successfully in Hawaii. . . .

*From the N. Y. Sun:*

. . . Perhaps the thing which impressed the non-alcoholics among the diners most was the happiness of every last one of the women and men who had achieved release from their liquid obsession.

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