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*The national monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, with the hope that it will help all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.*

## *Our Anonymity Is Both Inspiration and Safety*

*By Bill*

Discussing the subject of Anonymity in a previous Grapevine article, I tried to make the following points—that Anonymity has, for us A.A.s, an immense spiritual significance; that the principle ought to be preserved as part of our vital tradition; that since we have as yet no sharply defined policy there is confusion in some quarters as to what anonymity ought to mean; that we need, therefore, a perfectly clear tradition which all A.A.s would feel bound to respect. I also offered some suggestions which I hoped might become, after further discussion, the basis of a national policy on anonymity. These suggestions were:

1. It should be the privilege of each A.A. to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow A.A.s should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.

2. Conversely, the individual A.A. ought to respect the feeling of his local group about anonymity. If his group wishes to be less conspicuous in their locality than he does, he ought to go along with them until they change their views.

3. With very rare exceptions, it ought to be a national policy that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish, in connection with any A.A. activity, his name or picture in mediums of public circulation. This would not, however, restrict the use of his name in other public activities provided, of course, he does not disclose his A.A. membership.

4. If, for some extraordinary reason, a member thinks it desirable to drop his anonymity locally he should do so only after

consulting his own group. If, as an A.A., he is to make a nationwide public appearance the matter ought to be referred to National headquarters.

If these suggestions, or variations of them, are to be adopted as a National policy, every A.A. will want to know more about our experience so far. He will surely wish to know how most of our older members are thinking on the subject of Anonymity at the present time. It will be the purpose of this piece to bring everybody up to date on our collective experience.

Firstly, I believe most of us would agree that the general idea of Anonymity is sound, because it encourages alcoholics and the families of alcoholics to approach us for help. Still fearful of being stigmatized, they regard our anonymity an assurance their problems will be kept confidential; that the alcoholic skeleton in the family closet will not wander in the streets.

Secondly, the Policy of Anonymity is a protection to our cause. It prevents our founders or leaders, so called, from becoming household names who might at any time get drunk and give A.A. a black eye. No one need say that couldn't happen here. It could.

Thirdly, almost every newspaper reporter who covers us complains, at first, of the difficulty of writing his story without names. But he quickly forgets this difficulty when he realizes that here is a group of people who care nothing for personal gain. Probably it is the first time in his life he has ever reported an organization which wants no personal publicity. Cynic though he may be, this obvious sincerity instantly transforms him into a friend of A.A. Therefore his piece is a friendly piece, never a routine job. It is enthusiastic writing because the reporter feels that way himself. People often ask how Alcoholics Anonymous has been able to secure

such an incredible amount of excellent publicity. The answer seems to be that practically everyone who writes about us becomes an A.A. convert, sometimes a zealot. Is not our Policy of Anonymity mainly responsible for this phenomenon?

Fourthly, why does the general public regard us so favorably? Is it simply because we are bringing recovery to lots of alcoholics? No, this can hardly be the whole story. However impressed he may be by our recoveries, John Q. Public is even more interested in our way of life. Weary of pressure selling, spectacular promotion and shouting public characters, he is refreshed by our quietness, modesty and anonymity. It well may be that he feels a great spiritual power is being generated on this account—that something new has come into his own life.

If Anonymity has already done these things for us, we surely ought to continue it as a National Policy. So very valuable to us now, it may become an incalculable asset for the future. *In a spiritual sense, Anonymity amounts to the renunciation of personal prestige as an instrument of National policy,* I am confident that we shall do well to preserve this powerful principle; that we should resolve never to let go of it.

Now what about its application? Since we advertise Anonymity to every newcomer, we ought, of course, to preserve a new member's anonymity so long as he wishes it preserved. Because, when he read our publicity and came to us, we contracted to do exactly that. And even if he wants to come in under an assumed name, we should assure him he can. If he wishes us to refrain from discussing his case with anyone, even other A.A. members, we ought to respect that wish too. While most newcomers do not

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# EDITORIAL:

## On the 5th Step ...

*"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."*

We have made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves; at least we have tried, and even though our first efforts at this sort of thing are far off the mark, we have come up with an ugly assortment of defects of character and shortcomings. Were we to stop at this point, that is after completing the 4th Step, there would be nothing for us to do but get very drunk in order to forget it all. Our program, however, provides for carrying on the process to recovery and this 5th Step is an important link between the recognition of our faults and their correction.

The 5th Step encourages us to think of our faults in specific terms and helps us to be honest in our thinking by requiring us to consider our faults from several viewpoints. We consider how God regards a fault, how our neighbor regards it, how we ourselves regard it, and we force ourselves to take a position on how we will act in the future.

Further, by admitting to someone else the exact nature of our wrongs we are doing something about them, not just sitting and bemoaning them. We are practicing humility and recognizing our dependence on others which helps us to overcome the self-obsession that was leading us to destroy ourselves.

All of this is another way of saying that confession is good for the soul. It is one of the earliest discovered spiritual laws and its observance is just as necessary to our well-being as observances of any of the natural laws we take for granted. The only reason for attempting to analyze how it works is to make clear why it should be a continuing process. Our spiritual development proceeds in a spiral. The first time around the circuit, or through the Steps, we accomplish much, learning more about the preceding Steps as we perform each subsequent one. Because we learn something that is applicable to an earlier Step after we have passed it we are impelled to make the circuit again to apply our greater knowledge. We move on a slightly more advanced level the second time around, but again we recognize development as we proceed and we know that we're in a position to do a still better job than formerly—and so the spiral continues—onward and upward and ever away from the kind of thinking that leads to the first drink.—Bob D., *Garden City, L. I.*

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## *Tribute from a Son*

*(The boy, home on furlough from the Pacific, wanted to tell his father how much the latter's coming into A.A. had meant to everyone. But he couldn't quite put it into words. So, after he went back to duty in the Pacific, he wrote a letter, which the father permits The Grapevine to publish here, as a meaningful, glimpse of things that count the most).*

Dear Pop:

I was reminiscing tonight over the years before the war and I was thinking of all the troubles we used to have when you'd get sick. It sure was tough on all of us, but it was toughest on you. Before A.A. got started, no one used to think of calling a "drunk" a sick man. When he'd try to explain his sickness, it was received by a "we know" grunt. To most people it was a "stall" or "alibi".

When I look back at how you've changed in the past ten years, Pop, it seems like something from a fairy tale. It was such a great achievement that it seems remarkable to me. Maybe it's because our prayers are so seldom answered so fully.

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## *Letters Reveal*

(Early in January of this year, many A.A.s in the New York area were saddened by the death of one of the older members after a long and gallant struggle against an even more deadly malady than alcoholism. His contributions to A.A. had been so outstanding that perhaps the story of his over four and one-half years of sobriety and his abiding faith in the A.A. program, as evidenced by letters to fellow members, during a two year period of living apart from any group, may prove an inspiration to others who did not have the privilege of knowing him.)

On an extremely hot evening in the early summer of 1941, a veritable colossus of a man appeared at a meeting in the old 24th Street Clubhouse. Though a newcomer to the ranks of A.A., something about this individual other than his large frame and broad shoulders gave one the immediate impression that here was a potential tower of strength to the Group. During the remainder of his life this initial impression became a certainty.

Elliot, we afterwards discovered—though not from him—had been in the early years of the century a famous football player, later selected by Walter Camp for his all-time, all-America team.

After graduation from college, Elliot became an outstandingly successful construction engineer, taking time out during World War I to serve his country well as a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy.

Although in later years he came to a period in his life when his average consumption of whiskey was close to two quarts a day, apparently he was unique in always being able to attend to his business and in never showing the effects of excessive drinking to his associates. But as time passed, he himself came to realize that he had a serious problem. On numerous occasions the curtain descended so that in the morning all memory of what had taken place the previous evening had vanished. There were also several instances when leaving his home, he drove his car, apparently at terrific speed, through a great part of the night to awaken next morning in a hotel room in a distant city with no knowledge of how he had gotten there and no apparent reason for being there.

At his first A.A. meeting, Elliot realized that he belonged where alcoholics were gathered to tackle their mutual problem. Although he had had something to drink before his initial talk with an A.A. at luncheon that day and plenty to drink for many days previously, he evidently made his decision at that meeting. John Barleycorn never got in another blow. After four years in A.A., Elliot wrote:

"I've never had a dry drunk and don't want one. I guess I've been mighty lucky in my alcoholic career, for A.A. 'took' at once and the sense of relief and happiness has always

# Philosophy of Gratitude as Basis for Faith

been so great that drinking again has only the mental reaction of utter horror. I still think there isn't enough gratitude for the Boss or whatever it is that lets us spill the beans and still get home. And, to me, the feeling of gratitude is the easy and natural road to some consciousness of a Power that's running this show and that is mighty kind."

For the first year, Elliot took a very active part in group activities; 12th Step work, speaking occasionally and always inspiringly at open meetings, being especially articulate and vigorously direct in his comments in discussions arising at closed meetings, and at all times applying the program, as he understood it, to his daily life and to his association with his fellow men. Then came an opportunity to supervise a big war construction job in Texas and he, needing an outlet for his tremendous energy, accepted. We missed his strength and wise counsel during the ensuing year but heard from him sometimes and knew that he was still very much "on the beam." However, this was a period for him of seeking that spiritual conviction which he alone thought he lacked. When we saw him again he seemed to have found his answer. He remained

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## HEARD OVER NBC

Lumping them all together, alcoholics in A.A. and those not yet arrived, potentials and non-alcoholics alike, the many thousands who had already heard about A.A. and the millions who had not, throughout the nation everywhere people listened to laudatory words about Alcoholics Anonymous at 4 p. m., February 9, over NBC's national network.

Under the aegis of the American Medical Association, with their Director of Health Education, Dr. W. W. Bauer, as explanatory spokesman, on that date the "Doctors At Home" radio program dramatized the story of a drunk. Bill, an excellent salesman who was experiencing the proverbial family and boss troubles due to biting the bottle too often and too well, finally admitted that he needed help—that he would do anything to get sober and stay that way. But the admission didn't come until after an automobile accident. Though Bill, the drunken driver, came out unbanned, a pal was badly injured, and Bill's secretary dangerously so. For days the doctors didn't know if she would live or die.

The family doctor recommended A.A.—as did Dr. Bauer at the end of the program—and Bill was all set for an A.A. meeting when The story ended.

with us this time for a few short months, appearing frequently at meetings and at A.A. luncheons, a form of group therapy he particularly advocated, and then was offered and again accepted an engineering job in the western part of Virginia where his tremendous capacity for accomplishing things could have full scope. Originally intending to remain away for about six months, he was gone with only one major interruption for the better part of two years. During this period, his correspondence with A.A. friends becomes such an illuminating record of his gratitude for a life of sobriety and usefulness and such a testimonial to his unwavering faith, that we submit quotations from some of his letters to show what A.A. had come to mean to this great-hearted, fearless and absolutely honest man:

*January 26, 1944*

"That idea of living only for the day made a very great difference in my life and happiness. For the first time in over 60 years I am relaxed mentally, physically and deep-down inside somehow. And, oh boy! What a relief and joy it is. I can take on the work that I'm now doing with no more effort or tension than I would expend on a cross-word puzzle. When I look back almost three years I know what an absolutely unrepayable debt I owe A.A."

*February 19, 1944*

"Don't worry about the spiritual end. I've always thought that altogether too much importance was stressed in that direction.—'If we don't get the spiritual end we will get drunk and have no A.A. in us.'—That to me is bunk. We have to be sober to have the receptivity that one must have if the things of the spirit are to be allowed to come in. But for anybody to lay down any rule of what 'spiritual' means is sheer presumption. It is, to me, just a matter of faith that there is a reason for all this beauty and wonder of the thing we call life. It may be, and I think it is, just a practice ground for what's ahead—our real education that will start when all the limitations of this existence are shed. That's enough for me. I can't FEEL 'Dear God' as many can, and visualize the Deity when saying so. All I can do is to FEEL that there is a great Source of everything, and when I say everything I mean the infinite beyond this life as we know it. What it is, I haven't the least idea, but that it is, I'm sure. There must be a reason to whatever Power can create life. It can't all be for the dust heap."

*April 14, 1946*

"The thankfulness that I feel for the joy of

life during the time that is left is very, very real. Life has become a very sweet and happy thing instead of a harrowed, torn, unhappy thing. Thank God for the day I found our bunch of A.A.s."

*April 30, 1944*

"I miss the luncheons so much, as well as the meetings, but not from the standpoint of being necessary to stay dry. That has become an accepted fact and part of life for me. But always with the certain knowledge that if I ever experimented with a single drink I'd be taking in Belmont, Empire, Las Vegas, the Kentucky Derby, Hialeah and points north, east, west and south! As I have written some others, I think that gratitude is the greatest feeling that I have today, and am sure that it was the medium through which I finally got a real consciousness of a Power behind all this life and the greatest thing that anyone can be blessed with—Faith! And the possession of that only increases the gratitude all the more. It's a wonderfully beautiful world, when one's eyes are opened to it."

*May 27, 1944*

"My first local ewe lamb is getting along very well, but I've got my fingers crossed. Only two weeks out from the water—or rather booze—but his happiness to find he isn't a weakling and a bum but is just sick and can get over it, is pathetic. He's in the first stage of exaltation and when he gets down is the dangerous time. What a miracle it is to seek A.A. actually at work. And as for me personally it is a miracle and always will be—just the fact that I happened to meet it is just that. I can never begin to express my deepdown gratitude to first, the Boss and then to Bill and then to the Group for all that it has meant to me. The Boss made Bill that way; Bill made the Group that way; and the Group got me that way. So there you are. But how thankful I am that the Boss started it all!"

*July 8, 1944*

After lamenting for his ewe lamb who had gone stray, Elliot commented:

"Whoever I'm with I have a feeling that maybe they have some booze problem and that possibly they ought to know about A.A. Some of the uncomprehending stares that I've gotten in return would freeze you."

(However, he must have persevered for when we visited him almost a year later and were introduced to all of his friends as another A.A., they seemed to accept us willingly on the basis of that recommendation.)

*(To be concluded in the April issue)*

# WHEN ALCOHOLICS COME OF AGE

Reference has already been made in these pages to the proposition that alcoholics who have adopted the precepts and carry out the practice of A.A. may reasonably be expected to assume a degree of moral responsibility for their conduct—an obligation they were unable to discharge while in the grip of the alcoholic obsession (*The Grapevine*, November, 1945—The Moral Responsibility of the Alcoholic).

It is appropriate to consider next the nature and scope of the responsibility which comes to the alcoholic upon his liberation. Responsibility to whom and for what? This question cannot, of course, be answered within the compass of the present discussion. The following reflections, however, may serve to stimulate thought upon a problem each must solve for himself. Its solution is essential to give life direction, tempo and purpose. So far most of us have been concerned only with tempo.

It is a truism that we should strive for perfection. But what is our notion of "perfection?" St. Francis de Sales succinctly states the problem and summarily offers humbly, it will be noted, his conclusion:

"I hear of nothing but perfection on every side, so far as talk goes; but I see very few people who really practice it. Everybody has his own notion of perfection. One man think? it lies in the cut of his clothes, another in fasting, a third in almsgiving, or in frequenting the Sacraments, in meditation, in some special gift of contemplation, or in extraordinary gifts or graces—but they are all mistaken, as it seems to me, because they confuse the means, or the results, with the end and cause.

"For my part, the only perfection I know of is a hearty love of God, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Charity is the only virtue which rightly unites us to God and man. Such union is our final aim and end and all the rest is mere delusion."

At this point there is an admonition by St. Augustine which we might all heed. Note, too, the humility which characterises saints and sages as this one says:

"If thou shouldst say, 'It is enough. I have reached perfection,' all is lost. For it is the function of perfection to make one know one's imperfection."

We may be of several minds as to the "cause" of alcoholism. We may be of two minds whether "emotional immaturity" is at the bottom of the matter. There is agreement, however, on the proposition that the release of the alcoholic, when the A.A. philosophy takes deep root, results in an

unfolding of the human personality. An emergence of latent ethical and spiritual elements follows in the new-flowering personality. Negatively, the barriers to the march for perfection are removed. Constructively, the individual is freed to achieve his destiny.

Astute always to find excuses for themselves, alcoholics have sometimes steeped themselves in the worship of false psychological gods. This has been one of the barriers to spiritual growth. Some of us have fallen prey to the conviction (one of the marks of twentieth-century vanity) that nobody knew anything about psychology before Freud. It is no reflection on the undeniable advance in the study of mind and behavior to observe, for example, that surface rationalization of deep, discreditable motives in the subconscious has long been recognized as a factor in human conduct. Likewise, sexuality and the will to power were often perceived as the real effective forces at work under polite masks. But the older savants did not overlook a fact which the modernists are inclined to ignore and which the alcoholic disregards at his peril. In the words of Aldous Huxley, that is ". . . the fact that human nature is tripartite, consisting of a spirit as well as of a mind and body; the fact that we live on the border-line between two worlds, the temporal and the eternal, the physical-vital-human and the divine; the fact that, though nothing in himself, man is 'a nothing surrounded by God, indigent of God, capable of God and filled with God, if he so desires'."

The alcoholic has indeed a "split" personality!

not, so much, perhaps, in the strict schizophrenic sense as in the fact that his body has got itself separated from his soul ("psyche" means "soul" more than it does "mind"). The function of A.A. is to help to reunite the elements that comprise man so that he may become an integrated individual. In this undertaking the alcoholic is dealing primarily with character defects and personality blemishes. His task requires patience, humility and a sense of realism which in its true aspect is but a reflection of the highest level of idealism. Peculiar although he may be, the alcoholic is not alone in this enterprise. It has been the perennial occupation of mankind, of men of all conditions and of all time and places. How meaningful now is the following description of the attainment of a goal, left by an oriental philosopher:

"For twelve years I was the smith of my soul. I put it in the furnace of austerity and burned it in the fire of combat. I laid it on the anvil of reproach and smote it with the hammer of blame until I made of my soul a mirror. Five years I was the mirror of myself and was ever polishing that mirror with divers acts of worship and piety. Then for a year I gazed in contemplation. On my waist I saw a girdle of pride and vanity and self-conceit and reliance to devotion and approbation of my works. I labored for five years more until that girdle became worn out and I professed Islam anew, I looked and saw that all created things were dead. I pronounced four *akbirs* over them and returned from the funeral of them all, and without intrusion of creatures,

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## *Tribute from a Son (Continued from Page 2)*

I'm saying this all wrong, Pop, because I don't know how to put it into words. All follows think that they have the best father in the whole world. You've always been the best father to me but now there's something else. I'm so proud of you, Pop, for what you've done in the past few years that it's better than being Lincoln's son or even Uncle Sam's. They did wonderful things for other people, too, but you've climbed the biggest barrier in humanity. You've conquered yourself. It takes a thousand men's wills and a million men's patiences to do that completely.

I started to tell you how I felt when I was home but, I never got through the first sentence. I'll still never be able to put into words how much I love you for what you've done for Mom, me and the kids. I appreciate that even more now when they need you most and while I'm away. If you're not at the head of the line going into Heaven, Pop, then they need a new proprietor.

I've always wanted to write this letter to you but, I didn't want to get you upset over it. I hate to get mushy anyway but, I wanted you to know that I'll be thanking God for many a year for what you and He have done and I'll always appreciate it deeply.

I'll sign off now as it's getting late. So long.

Your loving son, *Raymond*

through God's help alone, I attained unto God."

In developing his spiritual nature, the alcoholic, for the first time in many cases, is enabled to contribute something of social utility. He is not necessarily preoccupied with prayer, reflection and meditation, large as these factors now become in his life. He will again be a man of action, which, says St. Thomas Aquinas, should be something added to the life of prayer, not something taken away from it. Thus, he will assume the discharge of his duties as a parent, a husband, a citizen and as an employer or employee. He will resume old avocations or take up new ones. He will become a universalist in his interests and avoid dangerous one-pointed concentration, even in his A.A. activities. This last seems to be important to the alcoholic. Darwin once wrote that "it is a cursed evil to any man to become so absorbed in any subject as I am in mine." He also said in later life that he was unable to take the smallest interest in poetry, art or religion. To advert to Huxley again:

"Professionally, in relation to his chosen specialty, a man may be completely mature.

Spiritually and sometimes even ethically, in relation to God and his neighbors, he may be hardly more than a foetus."

In his A.A. work the member may attain and preserve a substantial degree of useful maturity and avoid a narrow puritanism by remembering that he takes no motes out of other people's eyes, who permits the beam in his own eye to obscure the divine Sun and to prevent his working by its light. As Chuang Tzu says: "The sages of old first got Tao for themselves, then got it for others."

These ambulatory observations follow upon some reflection on just what is involved in the question of the moral responsibility of the alcoholic. The question is virtually cosmic and to answer it categorically appears impossible. But this much seems certain. Our new appraisal of ourselves reveals the essential dignity of the human person. Therefore, we must acquire self-respect by deserving it. We have rediscovered our unity with our fellows and the brotherhood of man. Hence, we must serve mankind, first qualifying ourselves as best we can. We have been made aware again of a Higher Power and of the

means of using it. Accordingly, we must become a communicant in order to be a recipient.

The short of the matter is, that to the alcoholic who will have it so, Alcoholics Anonymous is a philosophy of life, a technique of salvation and a program of destiny.—R.F.S., *Monclair, N.J.*

### Medics Hear A.A.

The February 4th meeting of the second series of lectures on mental hygiene, conducted by the Committee on Nervous Diseases and Mental Hygiene, was presided over by Frederic H. Leavitt, MD., and an overflow crowd was in attendance at the quarters of the Philadelphia County Medical Society. The principal speaker of the evening was Dr. C. Nelson Davis who took for his subject, "The Alcoholic Problem".

James H., one of the pioneer members of the parent A.A. in Philadelphia and one of its most active workers was also one of the guest speakers and presented a vivid picture of A.A.

The series of lectures will continue weekly until March 18, each Monday evening meeting being highlighted by a prominent speaker. All meetings are open to the general public.

## Our Anonymity Is Both Inspiration and Safety

(Continued from Page 1)

care a rap who knows about their alcoholism, there are others who care very much. Let us guard them in every way until they get over that feeling.

Then comes the problem of the newcomer who wishes to drop his anonymity too fast. He rushes to all his friends with the glad news of A.A. If this group does not caution him he may rush to a newspaper office or a microphone to tell the wide world all about himself. He is also likely to tell everyone the innermost details of his personal life, soon to find that, in this respect, he has altogether too much publicity! We ought to suggest to him that he take things easy; that he first get on his own feet before talking about A.A. to all and sundry; that no one thinks of publicizing A.A. without being sure of the approval of his own group.

Then there is the problem of Group anonymity. Like the individual, it is probable that the Group ought to feel its way along cautiously until it gains strength and experience. There should not be too much haste to bring in outsiders or to set up public meetings. Yet this early conservatism can be overdone. Some groups go on, year after year, shunning all publicity or any meetings except those for alcoholics only. Such groups are apt to grow slowly. They become stale because they are not taking

in fresh blood fast enough. In their anxiety to maintain secrecy they forget their obligation to other alcoholics in their communities who have not heard that A.A. has come to town. But this unreasonable caution eventually breaks down. Little by little some meetings are opened to families and close friends. Clergymen and doctors may now and then be invited. Finally the Group enlists the aid of the local newspaper.

In most places, but not all, it is customary for A.A.s to use their own names when speaking before public or semi-public gatherings. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters were present they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program. This preserves the principle of Anonymity so far as the general public is concerned and at the same time represents us as a group of alcoholics who no longer fear to let our friends know that we have been very sick people.

In practice then, the principle of Anonymity seems to come down to this: With one very important exception, the question of how far each individual or group shall go in dropping anonymity is left strictly to the individual or group concerned. The exception is; That all groups or individuals, when writing or speaking for publication as members of Alcoholics Anony-

mous, feel bound never to disclose their true names. Except for very rare cases, it is at this point of publication that nearly all of us feel we should draw the anonymity line. *We ought not disclose ourselves to the general public.*

In our whole history not more than a handful of A.A.s have ever dropped their anonymity so far as the general public is concerned. Some of these instances have been accidental, a few have been quite unnecessary and one or two are apparently justified. Of course there must be few policies which cannot sometimes, in the general interest, be suspended. Yet any who would drop their anonymity must reflect that they may set a precedent which could eventually destroy a valuable principle. The exceptions will have to be few, far between, and most carefully considered. We must never let any immediate advantage shake us in our determination to hang on to such a really vital tradition.

*Great modesty and humility are needed by every A.A. for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to A.A. as a whole. This principle of Anonymity before, the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attribute forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction and seldom, if ever, upon promotion.*

## END OF WAR, BEGINNING OF A.A.

My terminal leave from the Army Air Corps and my entrance into A.A. began on practically the same day. I am able to look back on seven months of sobriety (up to this 24 hour period). Alcoholics who may read this, and other citizens who might have been helping through taxes to finance my stay in a hospital for psychoneurotic veterans during that period, will appreciate my gratitude to A.A.

I know that my case has its parallels for I have seen them. In the hope that it may be helpful to some other fellow who is revolving in an alcoholic labyrinth on the order of my post-war experience I shall state, briefly, how I think I got that way.

My fight with the bottle started in college. I was sufficiently youthful and athletic to ride out the quick hard shocks that alcohol uses to wear down the opposition. I managed to skid through and take my degree. Now that I had gotten through the obstacle course of learning that our society sets up for its young men, I promptly junked all the sane things I had learned and set out to imitate the world's philosophers, writers, statesmen and artists in their lighter moments. I was much intrigued, for example, with Plato's excellent description of Socrates' ability to drink all night and go home sober. That was for me. (Later personal experience leads me to conclude that Plato must have had a hole in his head when he wrote that passage. It just can't be done.) I took a job and managed to hold it for a few years. War came: since it was announced to America on a Sunday morning I probably had a hangover that day. I quit drinking long enough to go through training as on Aviation Cadet. Once I'd graduated and been commissioned I got back on the merry-go-round. We were alerted for a Port of Embarkation. Most of my comrades pursued the policy that, since we would probably be overseas for who-knows-how-long, a man should drink all the whiskey, eat all the steaks, and chase all the women, in sight. I subscribed heartily to that formula: I was generally too drunk, however, to be interested in steaks and not sober enough to be interested in women. Before I knew it I was on my way to a destination that my orders saw fit to represent by a series of asterisks. I was later to echo that sentiment with vehemence. For about a year the seriousness of overseas life acted as a brake. For the most part I did my damndest to give Uncle Sugar my very best. Then I began to skid. I never contemplated a long flight but what I automatically included four or five stiff bolts of whiskey as soon as I got back on the ground. As my second year in the tropics began to wane, I began to turn into a jittery nervous wreck. Fear set in. The tropics are not kind to alcoholics. A com-

bination of fever, dysentery, and alcohol had destroyed my physical and mental well-being. Someone has said, "Alcohol is the quickest medium in which to escape the tropics." It is also the quickest medium to insure that one's mortal clay will stay in the tropics to enrich the soil under some mango tree.

Fortunately I ran out my time and was sent home for rest and rehabilitation before anything too serious happened. Then came my discharge on points last June. I was starting a bright new life in a bright new world, and I was licked at the start. I wondered how long my savings would keep me drunk and I determined to find out. The excitement began as soon as I cleared through the Separation Center and returned to New York. My beaten physical condition stood up for several days of heavy drinking and then gave up. It was at that time that I found A.A. More than anyone else, I was convinced that I was an alcoholic, and that first step, to me, is the turning point. The cold, hard logic is that no man can perform an act unless he can rationalize that act as being good for him. It is very difficult, once one is sincerely convinced he is an alcoholic, to rationalize another drink. I know, because I have tried to do just that. I thank our Higher Power for helping me to think straight these past seven months. As for thinking ahead of this present twenty-four hours, I don't care to; not as far as alcohol is concerned. Besides, it is not necessary any more than it is necessary to fire a gun to see if it's loaded.

I attended A.A. meetings for six weeks and was encouraged as to the possibility of my becoming a useful member of society. I signed up at one of our universities to study for an advanced degree. That meant residence in a community where A.A. was unknown. It worried me. During the past six months I've had to get through a couple of rough spots without the comfort of personal contacts with A.A. The importance of meetings cannot be minimized. During the recent holiday I went back to visit the New York group, I returned feeling that someone had given me a strong firm push on my path toward sobriety. Intermittent correspondence has helped tremendously.

I hope—well, you know what I hope. And that brings us up to the present.

— J.W., *Orono, Me.*

### Connecticut Maps Plan

South Norwalk, Conn., *Sentinel*: "The State Board for The Study, Care and Treatment of Inebriates . . . announced appointment of Dr. Dudley P. Miller as executive director as the first step in setting up a state-wide system of free care for alcohol addicts.

## The Clip Sheet

### Betting On the Drunk

By Wireless to the *New York Times*: "STOCKHOLM, Sweden, . . .—Sweden is a land . . . of many odd ways.

"Today's example: The population of Sandhult County in western Sweden is taking up a collection for the first drunk to qualify for lodging in the new county jail.

"That part of Sweden is virtually crimeless, and an inebriate is the district's only hope to inaugurate the new lock-up. The village drunk in Sjoemarken, where the jail is situated, is the logical favorite to win the jackpot, but he has said he will be back, hoping the fund will grow bigger."

\* \* \*

### Aid New Clinic

Washington, D. C., *Times-Herald*: "Eight new patients and six who were formerly treated at the Force School presented themselves as willing subjects for an alcoholic cure when the Polk Health Center Alcoholic Clinic for Negroes went into operation January 15.

"Co-operating with the new clinic is the Washington Negro Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, which meets Fridays and Sundays at 8:30 p.m. in the Y.M.C.A., at 1816 Twelfth St. NW. The group supplies volunteer clerical help for the clinic, and alcoholics who require group therapy are referred to the organization by the doctors."

\* \* \*

### We Know—We Paid and Paid

Phoenix, Ariz., *Arizona Republic*: "King Alcohol, with his satellites, beer, wine, and whiskey, is the largest single source of federal revenue, if the income tax be excluded.

"Last year, government taxes from this source totaled \$2,300,000,000."

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### Alcoholic, Not Anonymous

Brockton, Mass., *Enterprise & Times*: "A desk officer at police headquarters jovially inquired of a jocose 'guest' why he was visiting."

"'O, just a bit alcoholic, I suppose, but for the sake of the record, I'm not anonymous,' came the smart reply. 'For the sake of the record, it will be a good thing if you're not,' retorted the officer. . . ."

"The unsteady one gave his name and address and then added, off the record this time, 'Think nothing of it, pal, I'm just a social drinker on a night off.' 'You're drunk,' said the officer. 'It don't take you long to get the idea,' chortled the 'guest'."

## "SLIPS"

(Second in a series of discussions on the cause or causes of "slips," in which different A.A.s present their ideas, experiences and suggestions as possible help for others who may be having similar trouble.)

Now that I have matured somewhat, at least, and can to a certain extent face reality, I have no further doubts that the only reason I "slipped" after starting meetings was because I just hadn't made up my mind definitely that I really wanted to stop.

I thought I had reached the decision. I was fully convinced that my drinking was a serious problem and that I couldn't stop alone. Certainly I had had enough trouble to convince me on all of those points. So, I thought I had decided that I wanted to stop. Now I know I still had a little reservation in my mind.

I can't explain how one can stay in that state of mind after going through misery for years and after demonstrating repeatedly his own inability to cope with the situation. But I do think that it is not an uncommon state of mind. Many, I believe, have a hard time getting out of it.

Perhaps the most useful suggestion I could pass along to anyone is this: If you have any reservations of any kind about wanting to stop, no matter how tiny those reservations may be, you're likely to have trouble. Sometimes you have to do a real scrubbing job on your mind to find the trouble. But, the point is, you can do it and you can get rid of the reservation.

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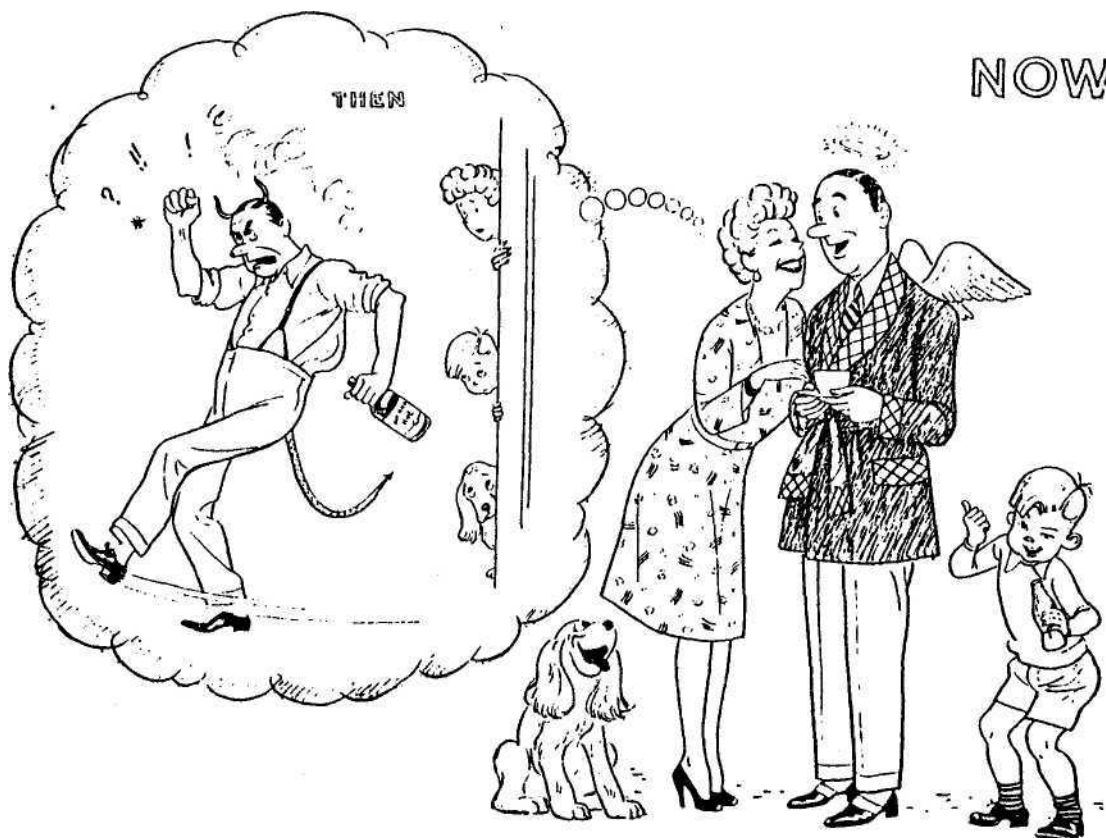
Nobody ever has to have a "slip" if he'll just go back to one of the oldest axioms in A.A. Don't take the FIRST drink. That's all. Forget all the rest of them. You will anyway. Just remember that FIRST one and duck it. After I learned to get up in the morning thinking upon that one point and go to bed at night thinking about it. I had no more trouble.

\* \* \*

The reason I had two slips during my first six months in the group—now I've been in over three years without any relapses—is that I thought I could compromise on a couple of points. Brother, it can't be done. The same to Sisters. You're either "in" this or you're going to be "out" eventually.

I tried to compromise on the spiritual business. I thought I could do the job on a scientific, clinical sort of basis. None of the "God stuff" for me. I said I couldn't take it, couldn't believe it, so I'd just deny it, and do the other things in the program.

Don't get me wrong. I have seen agnostics and even people who thought they were atheists come into the group and get along all right without any trouble. But they kept an open mind on the subject, where I actually and con-



"But the Spiritual Angle, Sweet . . . . I Don't Get It"

sciously went about denying the subject—only to myself, of course.

Fortunately, I wanted to stay dry so desperately that after I "slipped" I reexamined my viewpoints, had a talk with some of the oldtimers and decided that even if I couldn't go along at least I could keep an open mind on the subject. I discovered that if the mind is really open, something flows into it. Just when or how it happened, I don't know. But it happened. I don't have to compromise now.

\* \* \*

I am a member of the Phoenix group. Joined Dec. 15, 1944, but made quite a mess of things for one year. Now looking back, I have been able to understand why things went so badly with me and have finally at long length found the strength and guidance from God, for which I vainly searched for so long. I have experienced the spiritual feeling that is referred to—not once, but several times—so I do not think, but know definitely that God now is helping me. I have reached a calmness heretofore unknown to me. In short, I am humble and grateful for the blessing A.A. has enabled me to receive.

I am 35, married and have three children . . . I had been drinking for 19 years and . . . an extreme alcoholic for 13 of those years. Even then, 13 years ago, I was trying to quit with no success whatsoever.—*F.M.W.*

(To be continued in subsequent issues. *The Grapevine* will welcome contributions to this series from any A.A.s, and especially from any who have experienced "slips" and recovered.)

### A. A. "Induction Center" Tried as Aid to Veterans

An offer to share the N. Y. City Seamen's A.A. clubhouse was accepted by certain veterans of both wars at a recent meeting in that city—for the purpose of holding closed meetings for a new auxiliary A.A. veterans group.

It was voted to be an experiment and not to be considered an exclusive, separate A.A. group from others in the New York area.

The auxiliary veterans group would concern itself in "inducting" and "processing" newcoming veterans in the A.A. program, but soon after it would be encouraged to take their normal places as civilians in regular A.A. groups.

There was a need for this approach, it was thought, since many returning veterans consider themselves different in their problems of rehabilitation, particularly war-shadowed combat men. Cases of failure of civilian A.A. drunks to make this bridge were cited.

A Washington group member told of his recent experience in successfully forming a group of 62 WAVES and WACS who came into A.A. together. It was his opinion that many of them would not have come in individually until experiencing many more disastrous years of "low bottom" drinking.—*Hugh B., Manhattan.*

## CASE OF THE SOBER SEAMEN

No, that's not the title of the latest murder mystery. However, to those concerned with the welfare and efficiency of the Merchant Marine personnel, the recovery from alcoholism of several hundred men who go down to the sea in ships may seem a far more puzzling mystery than the most intricately-plotted who-done-it.

For as officials of shipping companies can attest, alcoholism has heretofore proved one of the most serious problems involved in the operation of our maritime fleets.

Take the case of Seaman Joe. Joe was a good seaman—industrious, quick to learn, trustworthy, respectful to his superiors, well-liked by fellow crew-mates—when he was sober. Trouble was, he was seldom sober.

Why did Joe drink? Nobody seemed to know, least of all, Joe himself. He swore he wouldn't drink, and sometimes he stuck to his resolve throughout a voyage, or even two. Then, one day, for no apparent reason, he'd go on a binge that inevitably ended in headaches for

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### MID-WEST MEETING

Dr. Bob S. will speak at the mammoth mid-west A.A. gathering in Iowa City, April 14. A big poster with arrows shooting through a map of Iowa from the 14 nearby towns with groups, straight to Iowa City, invites all A.A.s to the joint 3-in-1 banquet—Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Marengo—to meet the gangs from MO., NEB., SO. DAK., KANS.—MINN., WIS., ILL., OHIO."

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his employers, trouble for his shipmates, disaster for himself. Once he tried beating up the second mate. Another time, in a waterfront bar, he plunged in a bloody heap through a plate glass window. Invariably, he landed in hospital or in jail, sore in body and heart-sick at the conviction that he was crazy.

More than a year ago Joe recovered from a protracted spree at the Merchant Marine Rest Centre at Sands Point, where he was for a nervous breakdown. The WSA psychiatrist in charge introduced him to the program for recovery practiced by the more than twenty thousand ex-inebriates forming the international association of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The A.A. program of self-help and group therapy made a deep impression on Joe with its simplicity and sense. Could it be made to work for seamen as well as for the salesmen and bankers, mechanics and artists who comprised the membership of A.A.?

Joe recognized that the problems of seamen were different from the problems of these leading settled community lives ashore. Their jobs

kept them out of contact for long periods with friends and relatives, forced them to seek what companionship and recreation they could find in foreign ports. Frequently they were without homes to return to at trip's end. Even more important, Joe realized that the psychology of seamen was not that of landmen. Sensing themselves not as other men, they resisted the society of any but their own kind.

If A.A. was to be made to work for seamen, it must be adapted to the specialized occupational and psychological needs of seamen. If the program could be so adapted, what were its chances for success among the alcoholics in the maritime industries?

Joe consulted with other alcoholic convalescents at the Rest Centre, with interested Government psychiatrists.

As a result, and with the practical encouragement of numerous public-spirited doctors, religious leaders, social workers, shipping company representatives and other businessmen, the first Seamen's Group of Alcoholics Anonymous was launched.

That was in 1944. Since then the group's membership has expanded so rapidly that the original small club rooms where the Group's first meetings were held had to be exchanged, seven months ago, for a spacious two-story building dedicated to the club's exclusive use at 33½ West 24th Street, Manhattan. Other groups are foreseen in other coastal cities, here and abroad.

What is the secret of the A.A. program in combating alcoholism among seamen?

First, it teaches the victims of alcoholism that he is not suffering from weakness of will—he is suffering from a disease, a disease as actual as diabetes or epilepsy. Just as the diabetic is poisoned by sugar, the epileptic driven to convulsions by moisture pressure on the brain, so the alcoholic is poisoned, physically and mentally, by alcohol.

Second, those who promulgate the program among alcoholic seamen are themselves alcoholic seamen. They understand as no landman can the problems a seaman confronts in overcoming alcoholism. As Seaman Joe puts it, in his frequent talks at hospitals, union halls, social centres and maritime schools: "The only difference between me as I am now—healthy and contented, with dough in my pocket and nothing too bad to face on my conscience—and some shipmate shaking to pieces with a hangover, broke and with a grudge against the world—the only difference is one drink."

To help seamen to avoid taking that one drink, and the uncounted number that follow whenever an alcoholic touches alcohol, the pro-

gram provides the therapeutic and recreational facilities of its club. There ordinary seamen and four-striper alike can find enlightenment on his problem, companionship of those he understands and who understand him, the springboard for wholesome association, through a regular Monday evening Get-together, with members of the opposite sex. At the Group's Friday night open meeting he hears testimony as to the advantages of sobriety delivered by fellow seamen who bear living witness to this testimony.

At Wednesday's closed meeting he can air his "beefs" without fear or favor.

The club, as well as all Group activity, is supported by voluntary subscriptions. There are no dues or assessments of any kind. A member's initiation fee consists in nothing but his sincere professed desire to overcome the problem of drink.

As for the steps the Group uses in overcoming excess drinking they sound disarmingly simple:

1. Admission of Alcoholism—that one drink is too many and forty is not enough.
2. Personality analysis and catharsis—being honest with yourself and others.
3. Adjustment of personal relations—be willing to make amends.
4. Dependence upon some Higher Power outside yourself.—The Group, etc.
5. Working with other Alcoholics—Getting out of yourself.

According to those who conscientiously follow them, these five steps are the real secret of the program's success. For they are steps each member of the Group chooses and pursues for himself, in his own way, without outside interference. Perhaps this, too, is why the Seamen's Club is so popular with men who formerly spent all their time in port at bars. It's operated by seamen for seamen. They're doing the whole sobering up job themselves.

How good a job it's proving to be can be summed up in a final word from Seaman Joe:

"You know the phrase, 'like a drunken sailor'? Well, here's predicting it won't be long 'til that phrase is changed to 'sober as a seaman'. If it is, the Seamen's Group of A.A. will be entitled to a major share of the credit."—*J.F., Seamen's Group, N.Y.C.*

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### DOCUMENTARY FILM

The March of Time is in the process of making a documentary film on alcoholism, in which Alcoholics Anonymous is to play a large part. The film, said a March of Time official, will probably not be ready for release for several months to come. Prior to the release they will notify the Central Office, which in turn will inform all A.A. groups in time to catch the picture immediately it is out.



# Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home or Abroad

Letters to this department are invited on any subject pertinent to A.A. Due to space limitations you are asked to hold your letters to a maximum of 350 words.

Only initials will be published unless the writer authorizes use of his first name as identification for A.A. friends.

*The Grapevine* will not divulge the full name of any writer but will forward A.A. communications addressed to the writers of letters published here.—The Editors.

## Let's Write Them!

*From St. Georges, Bermuda*

We are writing to you, our A.A. friends at home, to ask for your help. This is an appeal to each and every one of you, as individuals, to help us to spread the teachings and practices of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to a distant island in the Atlantic. Let us tell you how you can be a speaker at one of our meetings. Three comprise our Group at this writing but our work is well cut out for us and we are sure that we will grow. We never knew each other until three months ago but now, through the fellowship of A.A. we feel as though we had been together for most of our lives. . . . Tonight at our meeting we will have our first new prospect and in addition a doctor (a lady Captain) to whom we first told our story. We are now on our way and shall give it every thing we can.

Now, here's where you come in. In the States, which is Home to us, there are usually older and established Groups at least within shooting distance. Here we are hundreds of miles across the waves from any Group. We are only three. You, at Home, are thousands. Will you be a speaker at one of our meetings? Will you write to us, tell us your story, give us your experiences, your suggestions or anything that will help us to spread A.A. teachings and way of life?

Try to picture us. We are three A.A.'s and one wonderful wife who understands. All about us are several hundred American men, working away from homes and families, in a foreign country. Very few of us are lucky enough to have our wives with us. There is very little to provide amusement in our spare time. While it is true that there are many wonderful points of interest to visit in the Islands, our spare time is only at night and Sundays. At night the only things that are open aside from very poor movies are the ginmills. On Sundays even these are closed. This leaves the alcoholic and others as well with but one prime diversion. Need we say more?

If you would write to us it would help immeasurably to spread the A.A. teachings. We

could read your letters to the Group at our meetings and thus you would be our speakers. How about it? Perhaps you have wanted to tell your story to a Group for a long time. Perhaps you have hesitated because you were afraid that you would suffer stage-fright. Perhaps you thought that your story wouldn't be of help to someone. This should be the answer to getting something into words and off your chest.

We know that we need help very urgently. We ask you from the bottom of our hearts to give us that help which was so freely given to you by others in A.A. before you. Please don't wait until next week. Please be a speaker in absentia at the next meeting of the St. Georges, Bermuda Group of Alcoholics Anonymous.

In writing us please *do not use* the words Alcoholics Anonymous on the envelope. Address us simply, *Box #50, St. Georges, Bermuda*. This may sound unusual but we have very good reasons for it at this time. - S.L.V.

## One Wife's Views

*From Maplewood, N. J.*

I am the wife of an alcoholic who needed help so badly that upon entering A.A. it was quite difficult to determine who had the problem. After three years in the Group, with no interruptions, thank God, I feel that I must pass a little of my experience on to help others.

My profession kept me very busy for a long while but as El's alcoholic state progressed, I too, without realizing it, came slowly but surely to the breaking point. I was physically and mentally wrecked. I went through the tortures of Hell and I hope never again to experience such despair.

I know without the help of A.A. I could never have been restored.

When El decided to let A.A. help him, I, too, was ready for help. With the constant guidance of a devoted sister and the kindness of ladies from the A.A. group, I began to get well again.

There were times when I had to make a great effort to get to a meeting but honestly I never came away without a great spiritual lift. I had at last found hope.

Slowly and surely El and I got well and that by the Grace of God was the most wonderful thing that could have happened to us.

Because of this experience I am eager to help others. I feel like shouting to the world and I am doing just that through radio and discussion.

I know that the wife can be a great influence for good—however, I don't believe that she can make her husband stop drinking. I know from facts learned in A.A. and experience that the

desire must come solely from him. He must do it for himself alone.

But I should like to suggest that wives take a very active part in the program and attend all meetings possible. It is most interesting to know how much can be learned in this way.

As I have stated, I learned a new way of life and A.A. became our life line.—*Sarah M. K.*

## Another Wife's View

*from Portland, Ore.*

If wives are important to the success of the Alcoholic in A.A. why not say so, instead of pushing them into the discard like an old cigar stub?

It seems as though the wife has always taken the brunt of the alcoholic's misery. It was always the wife who covered up for him, worked for him, lied for him and fought for him. Cutting herself off from friends and family, because they continuously told her he was "no good".

The wife we are speaking of, is the one who stuck by her husband, through thick and thin. Not the wife who walked out when times got rough, and back when things brightened up. We mean the wife who, regardless of her own better judgment, tried as best she knew how, to keep the home together. Many of these wives kept that home together by their own salaries, year in and year out. But, still felt they had something worth fighting for. We, who have been in A.A. a number of years, know we were right. It was worth fighting for.

Why, if we have found happiness since A.A. entered our lives, do we want recognition? Why does anyone want recognition for their efforts? You A.A.s like the glory of recognition. Why not the wives then? It would not only make the wives of the present A.A. members feel better, but it would give the wives of prospective A.A. members something to shoot at. Any human being likes to receive a pat on the back, for work well done. If they don't get that pat on the back, they soon lose interest and wonder, "What's the use of all the effort."

Many wives feel they have been pushed into the background by A.A. and, while their husbands are sober, they have lost his companionship. She must come last in his activities. The proper recognition of her efforts, the proper pat on the back, when earned, would change that feeling to one of partnership. She would feel she had gained a partnership, instead of losing his companionship. At least that is the way it worked in our family. We have worked A.A. together. When my husband worked on

*(Continued on Page 12)*

## AFTER HER "WILL POWER" FAILED

For several months my drinking habits were becoming steadily worse. I would not give up hope that at some future date I would be able to control my drinking. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I had the idea I would trot out this "will-power" others seemed to have and to put it to work when I needed it. Somehow I had been able to shake it out after a night and day of drinking but this time I didn't seem to be able to face the kitchen stove until I had a drink. Fortunately, there was a little left in the bottle, so while my husband was in the bathroom shaving I took a "quickie". This steadied me enough to enable me to cook our breakfast, mine consisting of black coffee.

As we all know who have traveled this road, along about 10 o'clock the shakes return. I saw no point in suffering. Another "quickie". Needless to say, I ran out of whiskey, dressed and went to the liquor store and returned with a fifth.

It now became necessary to take the drinks more often. By nightfall, instead of having a clean house and hot supper when my husband returned from work I was a drunken object piled in the bed. I had hidden the bottle in the bathroom and all during the night I would slip in and take a drink. Of course, morning found me a shaking mass of nerves. My husband again left for work with a warning that I must stay sober and straighten up. I didn't know how to straighten up, except by taking a few drinks to quiet my screaming nerves. Naturally the second day duplicated the first, and the third and the fourth, until at last it would only mean death if I didn't get off the stuff. Finally I shook it out with the help of my sister.

This was the first time I had ever been on such a spree. I resolved never to do it again. But I did. Again and again. Each time it became increasingly worse. My hangovers were almost unbearable. There was no happiness when I was drinking. It was simply oblivion. I knew nothing of what transpired for days and then remorse would catch me in its clutches.

At last the voice of my sister penetrated my befogged alcoholic mind. She read to me an article in our local paper—something about an organization called Alcoholics Anonymous. She asked me why I didn't write them. I paid very little attention to her, but after she left I hunted feverishly through the paper for the article to read it myself. I never found it, so thought she must be "nuts".

I decided now was the time to use this "will-power" of mine and at the next party we attended I trotted it out. I took only two drinks the first hour, but goodness knows, that "will-power" of mine let me down. After the first two I wound

up as usual—drunk again. This spree ended in a sanitorium. There I heard more about A.A.

Thinking that I would contact them, I went home. The humiliation of having to be locked up in a sanitorium to get sober kept me from drinking too much for a month, but Brother Alky caught me again in his trap. It was then I began to believe that I was hopeless.

I at last turned around and faced the woman from whom I was trying to get away. I listened to her say, "You are a doomed woman, you know you can't stop drinking by yourself. You've tried many times but always failed. Your future is black as sin. You will either kill yourself or die in a drunken condition. Your husband is sick of you. Your sister is sick of you; even you are sick of the thing you have become—you must have help."

I tried to pray, but no words came. I felt I had wandered too far from God for Him to hear me now.

Being unable to hold a pen in my shaking hands I asked my niece to write a letter to A.A. for me. This she did with some doubts as to the wisdom of her action. Two nights later, while lying on the couch holding a book before me—wishing I could read and get some sense out of what I read, someone knocked on my door. I now know that knock opened the door to a new world of opportunities. Three women and a man entered, all nice looking people. People who looked like neighbors—but they were different for they were members from A.A. They were alcoholics, they had come in answer to my feeble cry for help.

As I sat there holding my hands to keep them from shaking, listening to them talk, I thought, "They can't possibly know what I've gone through. These people all look happy and healthy, they have not ever been drunks". They soon dispelled this doubt from my mind. They opened up with both barrels and let me have their stories straight from the shoulder.

They then asked me if I thought I was an alcoholic, if I was unable to control my drinking. I reluctantly admitted I was an alcoholic, but was whole hearted in saying I could not control my drinks. They didn't tell me how to stay sober but they did leave me with literature and an invitation to attend one of their meetings.

I very eagerly seized the literature and as I read each story in the booklet, I said, "Yes, that is me. That is me!"

Thus began my new life of sobriety—grateful for any crumbs of wisdom that came my way, thankful to be able to attend the meetings.

I went to my first A.A. meeting resembling something someone had dreamed of in a nightmare. My face and eyes were swollen, I had

bruises all over me. I always seemed to have trouble staying out of the way of the furniture. On my last binge the tables and chairs, even the radiators jumped out and hit me, or it seemed.

Now in my sixth month of sobriety I can laugh about it, but then I had a hard time forcing myself out to meet people, to expose myself to public view.

Thank goodness, I wanted sobriety enough to go through anything to achieve that happy state, so I went to work on myself, and others. I have emerged from a state of foggy misery, and understand my trouble. I understand that I am afflicted with the disease of alcoholism, that though I can never be cured, I can be an arrested case. With that I am happy. I am free from the desire and need of drinking. My eyes are opened to the need of others. The good and pleasure I receive from helping another is indescribable. I have learned many things through A.A. I am learning something new each day. When the final curtain falls I shall still be learning.

How I have achieved this happy, healthy state, I cannot say. I do know I could not have achieved it without the help of A.A. I do know it is not the mythical "will-power" I once thought I had. It is more than that. It is "God-power."

Needless to say I am deeply grateful for A.A. For what they have taught me—how to live happily—though sober, a state I once thought impossible.

Every day I thank God for the organization and ask only that I may be able to help other unfortunate persons to find their true place in life as I have.—*M.S., Memphis, Tenn.*

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### Golden Rule for Everyday

As part of the national program now under way to bring industry and labor into more practical daily use of the Golden Rule, Clemens Mortenson, personnel manager of the P. & F. Corbin Mfg. Co., New Britain, Conn., addressed the local Rotary club and the Christ Church Men's club, making prominent mention of the A.A. program in both speeches.

Mr. Mortenson cited A.A. as an outstanding example of the miracles that can be accomplished by resorting to "spiritual values and right thinking" and then making a daily practice of putting these two ideals to work.

He attended the regular weekly meeting of A.A. here and spoke in glowing terms of his contacts with A.A. groups in widely scattered sections of the country.

Under the general topic of "New Horizons" Mr. Mortenson asserted "the time is already here when we must resort to teamwork in using spiritual values in a practical way."

# A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Straight from the one source of reliable information on the subject—the Central Office in New York City—come these interesting figures:

As of February, 1946, there were 752 A.A. groups, including the as yet relatively few but steadily growing number in other countries, and well over 23,000 members. The Central Office, which takes a census every six months, will use for public release on membership during the next six months the round numbers of 24,000—and they're being modest at that.

In the month of January alone, the Central Office received 3,117 inquiries as the result of the Reader's Digest reprint of an article from the December, 1945 issue of *The Grapevine*.

\* \* \*

The Montpelier, Vt., *Evening Argus* is devoting, gratis, space to publishing the test questions put out by Johns Hopkins University Hospital, Baltimore, Md., to determine whether or not a person is alcoholic. The newspaper runs one question each day, followed by: "If the

answer to this question is 'Yes' and you want helpful information, write A.A., P. O. Box 454, Montpelier, Vt." Requests for information (and help) have been received by the Montpelier Group from points 135 miles distant. Miss B. Elaine Atkins, editor and publisher of *The Argus* not only speaks highly of A.A. and what she has seen it accomplish, but she very definitely does something about it. . . . One Vermonter, with his wife, travels every Sunday night from Windsor to the state capital for the A.A. meeting—a round trip of 150 miles.

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## A.A. DIGEST —Excerpts from Group Publications

*The Eye-Opener*, Los Angeles, Calif.: "The following figures are submitted by the Secretary as a report of the activities of the Central Office for the year 1945.

"The Office has been open 304 days.  
 "Personal interviews to newcomers 303.  
 "90 calls given out.  
 "3300 telephone inquiries answered,  
 "1204 pieces of literature mailed out.  
 "976 letters written during the year.  
 "Speakers furnished to all organizations who wanted to be further informed about A.A.—such as universities (USC and UCLA), churches and service clubs.  
 "Information given out for 3 radio broadcasts." \* \* \*

*Central Bulletin*, Cleveland, Ohio: "An absent-minded A.A. sent in a dollar for a subscription to the Bulletin and asked for a squib about his one-man group which was functioning for the past six months and going strong.

"We've given him his writeup—now will he please write us and give us his name and address, so we can send him a Bulletin for a year. Tsk! Tsk!" - - -

". . . The new procedure adopted by these ex-patients (from Charity Hospital) will be to hold nightly half-hour meetings for patients to fully acquaint them with A.A. procedure. These meetings will be conducted by the volunteer workers who are on duty each night. This enables the patients to get an insight of how A.A. works before they leave the hospital and when they leave it will make them feel more at home in group meetings."

\* \* \*

*The Toss Pot*, Charleston, W. Va.: "If we are resentful of things among ourselves (in the Group) we divert the purpose of A.A. . . . A.A. can never be hurt from outside—only from within. . . .

"The greatest danger to progress in A.A. is the danger of being satisfied with accomplishments."

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*Hi and Dri*, Minneapolis, Minn.: "... Suppose we have a look at an article . . . in the Yale Review on the 'Physiology of Alcoholism'. The piece is written by one Dr. Haggard who . . . heads up Yale University's current studies on what physical causes contribute to an alcoholic's misery. The ultimate hope of the study is to find a 'Penicillin' or possibly a 'Sulfa' which, when administered to an alcoholic, will cure him of his ailment. Dr. Haggard discusses the whole matter of alcohol from the physical side, and seems to believe that there are definite physiological reasons why one man is an alcoholic and why another man standing next to him at a bar may be merely a 'normally excessive drinker.' He does not claim to know what those reasons are, but at least it seems the 'men in white' are in there pitching, trying to find the answer.

"Is alcohol an allergy? Dr. Haggard thinks not. Is it a glandular condition? Well, perhaps, he says. In any case, he agrees with us in the belief that until a specific cure is uncovered, an alcoholic's only hope is to stay away from the stuff. . . . Our 24-hour program makes this possible."

\* \* \*

*Camel Club Chronicle*, Marshalltown, Iowa: "Well, The Chronicle is just beginning its second year of publication. It was founded just a year ago by a great fellow who has had his share of trouble; and here's hoping it is past. . . . He said: 'Do you fellows mind if I start a sheet and finance the first issues out of my own pocket?' During the year, we have received many compliments concerning the sheet; also, we have received many donations, for which we are thankful."

A series of seven articles on A.A. have been prepared by the Shreveport, La., Group and are now appearing in the *Shreveport Times*. . . . "A.A.—What it is and How it Works" will be discussed by a member of the Minneapolis Group, speaking before an assemblage of more than 500 pastors from Minnesota and adjacent states who are attending a conference in that city. . . . The Savannah, Ga., Group, which originated last October, now have their own clubrooms. . . . Sponsored by a committee known as the Alcoholic Confidential Assistance Committee, co-operating with local A.A.'s, alcoholics arrested in Plainfield, N. J., will henceforth be heard on a special court day, when the courtroom will be cleared of spectators. The alcoholic's sentence will be suspended, provided he or she will consult with the committee and follow their proposed program.

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On the request of the superintendent of the California Institution for Women at Tehachapi, Glendale A.A.'s got a group going within the institution, aided by members from Burbank, North Hollywood, Inglewood and other nearby communities. With regular meetings every two weeks as a starter, the Tehachapi Group is already going strong. . . . Membership of the Memphis, Tenn., Group has increased to such an extent that a second group has been formed in Crosstown. . . . A.A.s, police, probation officials, and officers of county and medical societies are among those who took part in a convention of the Institute on Chronic Alcoholism held at the University of Minnesota. . . . Until now, the Greenville, S. C., Group has been meeting the office of one of the members. They've outgrown that space and are now holding regular sessions at the Coca-Cola Bottling Co., plant.

\* \* \*

In Battle Creek, Mich., they've devised a way of remaining anonymous, strictly. Referring to a big open meeting and banquet affair, a member

explained how they maintained complete anonymity: "We invited so many friends and friends of friends that the guests couldn't possibly tell an A.A. from an A.B. or an M.D. But don't get the idea that only those with college degrees are welcome. Many of us have degrees only from the University of **Experience**." . . . At the *Second Anniversary* celebration of the Tampa, Fla., Group the 150 celebrants included members from a dozen states; their roster today reads 103 members. . . . The two Colorado Springs, Colo., groups, now five years old, have a membership of over 40; other Colorado groups are in Pueblo, Cannon City, Salida, and Gunnison. . . . In four years the Indianapolis, Ind., A.A.'s have grown to about 275 men and women.

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Parole supervisors and welfare workers in twenty Northeastern Indiana counties heard a talk by a Fort Wayne A.A. . . . More than 200 A.A.s, including members from Saginaw, Flint, Pontiac, Royal Oak, Travers City, Detroit, and Windsor, Ont., attended the *Second Anniversary* festival of the Bay City Group. . . . Within five months after the Davenport, Iowa, Group was started, July 1945, it had acquired clubrooms—at 404½ Brady Street. . . . The El Paso, Tex., Group, with 10 members, has its own post-office box #211, El Paso. . . . Hays, Kans., A. A.s are growing slowly but surely in numbers; two years ago they were three, today they are fifteen.

\* \* \*

"It's not the numbers that count so much," said a speaker of the Manhattan Group, "but the *quality of one's sobriety*." . . . Among the newest groups to be formed are: Brockton, Mass.; Port Arthur, Texas; St. Johnsbury, Vt.;

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Elmira and Newburg, N. Y.; Redwood City, Calif.; and Torrington, Conn. . . . And a few of the groups which have recently furnished speakers to local clubs, civic organizations, medical societies, churches, etc., are Chicago, Ill.; Orlando, Fla.; Newark, N. J.; Dallas, Texas; Peekskill, N. Y.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Reading, Mass.; and Bridgeport, Conn.

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Attending the Burlington, Iowa, Group's *Second Anniversary* meeting were 200 members from Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Missouri. . . . The flourishing group in Mt. Vernon, N. Y., marked their *Third Anniversary* with a big gathering which included many A.A.s from New York City and environs.

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In one of those competitive quiz broadcasts in which scores are kept and prizes given, A.A.s of Hartford, Conn., bested members of the Springfield, Mass. Group on a recent "Quiz of Two Cities" radio show in the latter city. . . . In the new hospital to be built in Atlanta, Ga., there will be a ward set apart exclusively for A.A. . . . Detroit, with its 20 groups, now has 800 members in all. In Louisville, Ky., where a \$100,000 clinic for treatment of alcoholics is soon to be established, the A.A. membership totals 80. . . . The Doan, Ohio, Group romped dryly but merrily through their *Fifth Anniversary* recently.

\* \* \*

Because of the success of the A.A. group in San Quentin prison, the Superintendent of the Iowa State Penitentiary at Fort Madison indicated in the *Presidio* (prison publication) that he would like to see a group started in that institution. Following this lead, A.A.s of Des Moines are getting busy on the project.

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Further testimony of increasing recognition among non-alcoholics that alcoholism is a disease comes from New Jersey's Essex County where a new treatment for rehabilitation of alcoholics in the Essex County Penitentiary is in progress. Warden Read said that in line with progressive methods of handling inmates, alcoholics are segregated from other inmates. Alcoholics will be examined each day by the prison psychiatrist and records kept pertaining to the prisoners' psychological and physical make-up, he said. A probation officer will endeavor to bring released alcoholics in contact with the nearest A.A. group.

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Another *First Anniversary* was celebrated recently when the North Shore group meeting at Manhasset held a birthday party with about 50 present. Starting with a nucleus of 8 members a year ago, this group now numbers about 40 active members and has been averaging an attendance of about 90 to 100 at its weekly open meetings.

**Mall Call . . .** (Continued from Page 9)

the husband, I worked on the wife. By so doing, we have kept many homes together, that were otherwise to be split. We have found that helping others makes for a better understanding of our own problems. But, that is because my husband has always given me much more credit than was deserved, not just within our own home, but openly, at meetings, with public officials, or wherever he may have talked. That recognition, those public pats on the back, have been like vitamins to me. They have brought remarks from some of the wives, that make me realize that they, too, would like it if their efforts were recognized. No, they were not jealous. Because a compliment to me, was, of course, a compliment to them. But, they were a bit wishful, that they too might receive such a compliment from their own husbands.—"A wife."

\* \* \*

#### A Cause of Friction

*From Ogden, Utah*

The few A.A.s from out of Utah whom I have had the privilege of talking with have imposed the idea that splits in the A.A. groups are common place and nothing to be alarmed about.

I believe that the root of this friction problem exists due directly to that one misunderstood term "sponsorship."

Too often, sponsors contact the new man, and at the earliest possible moment they pour him into a meeting, wash their hands of their responsibility and go out after another prospect. This most certainly is the "easy" way.

The 15 months that I have been dry, thanks to A.A. has proved this point to me. A man should have the basic fundamentals of the A.A. program before he ever attends a meeting. I do not believe that seeing one A.A. member is enough. He should be taken around, by his sponsor, until he visits many A.A.'ers and spends an evening talking the program out. Have him clear his receiving set of the static of improper thinking, and in order to receive God's help. That's a big order for this new man, and more static clearing can take place by two or three men sitting around a table over a cup of coffee in one evening than the new man can get out of many large meetings.

A.A. most certainly is not the meetings alone. Meetings are the light, the "fun to do" part of our program. And the associationship is great stuff. But are we doing the man an injustice, by ignoring the fact that in proper sponsorship lies the foundation of sober thinking?

And is not most of the friction caused, in meetings, by persons who are still sick mentally?—D.P.