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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.

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Clinics to Highlight Convention in Memphis

IF You CANT PHONE

From New Rochelle, N. Y.

It was about the end of April, after the 25th I'm sure. I had been seven months dry and rarely phoned anyone to ease the jittery nerves.

On this particular evening, after having felt relatively serene and relaxed for a few weeks, I was suddenly upset by something I read, I decided I'd shake it off, distracting myself with other things and finally prepared for bed. But no sleep! I was badly disturbed. I got up, read a book, smoked a lot, and then went back to bed. But still no sleep.

Finally, I decided I'd get this thing out of my system. I'd make a call! I jumped out of bed and grabbed my bathrobe. I was going to talk on that phone as never before. Then another jolt. The bloody phone strike! This was long distance. Coast to coast. For an alcoholic it must always be the best, biggest, and longest.

Thanks be to God I had nothing around to drink.

In a few moments I was praying and looking at my typewriter. Then I realized how often I had expressed myself silently on paper better than talking over the phone.

There I sat late at night tapping out my heart and mind, disturbed only slightly by the sound of a plane winging its way to the airport or a boat as it passed on the Sound. I poured out my thoughts, gave vent to my emotions, and was greatly relieved.

I signed my letter and sealed it, went to bed and slept peacefully.

If you can't phone, write.—D.G.

TWO THOUSAND members of Alcoholics Anonymous are expected to gather in Memphis, Tenn., this month for the third annual Southeastern Regional Convention, Sept. 19-20, at which Bill W. will be the principal speaker.

A unique feature of the convention will be a series of clinics to be held each morning on a variety of group and individual problems such as: Club Room Management; Problems of Group Secretaries; Types of A.A. Meetings; Methods of 12th Step Work.

Data for the clinics was obtained in questionnaires sent out to southeastern groups and has been correlated for presentation by discussion leaders. Eight clinics have been scheduled.

Other activities include a steamboat ride on the Mississippi, a barbecue in the park, both open and closed A.A. meetings, and an informal, social pow-wow. A.A. members are invited to bring wives, husbands, families and friends, for whom the schedule provides plenty of activities.

The meeting will be held in the Memphis Auditorium. According to Maryan H., chairman of the convention committee, registration will begin Thursday afternoon, Sept. 18, with an informal gathering of early registrants scheduled for that evening.

Vern W., chairman of the reservation and registration committee, says that the registration fee of \$5, payable on arrival, includes a ticket for the steamboat ride and the barbecue; extra tickets may be purchased for friends for \$1 each. Hotel reservations may be made through P. O. Box 1364, Memphis, Tenn.

In one of a number of bulletins sent out to members by the convention committee, the chairman said: "We are in no sense endeavoring to promote a national convention or set Memphis up as headquarters for such a meeting. However, we feel that A.A.s from regions other than the Southeastern will be interested and that much can be gained by an exchange of ideas by A.A. from widely different sections of the country."

NONE SO BLIND

From Temple City, Calif.

A.A. has gone to far places and reached into dark deserted corners to cut the tentacles of alcoholism; but it has not gone far enough, or deep enough—as we have reason to know when we find ourselves smack up against a barrier of misinformation erected by a disinterested public.

Some of the inaccuracies are funny—some are tragic, but all should be corrected even if we have to shout from the house-tops.

Even after reading *Alcoholics Anonymous* I myself had some sort of vague delusion that there was a great deal of "hush-hush" about not giving your right name. I thought that all the men were called Bob and Bill and all the women were Mary and Sue, and before my first meeting I was not a little apprehensive that I might meet someone I knew and cause them great embarrassment. I wondered if I should acknowledge the acquaintanceship, or look blank when we were introduced.

I have collected quite a few of these "mis-guiding lights" and I think I have a story about two drunks that will end all stories about two drunks:

These two drunks had reached that maudlin stage, full of love and emotion found only in two perfect strangers who have spent an evening holding down the same bar. "Lissen," said the

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Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in The 12 Steps. The A.A. book of experience, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other literature, including The 12 Points of Tradition, are available through any group or the Central Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

A.A. Program Opens Door to Spiritual Birth

From Washington, D. C.

I am an alcoholic, now sober in A.A. for two and a half years. For that I am grateful to A.A., to a Power greater than A.A., and to a power which vastly transcends any power I have ever had, or now have.

I like my A.A. sober life better than my former drunken life. I hated that drunken life long before I ever heard of A.A. I wanted to change it, and I tried. But I did not know how to change it, and I failed. Others tried to help me. They failed also. They were as powerless over my alcoholism as I was.

And I like my A.A. sober life better than another sober life I once had, long before A.A. I can make both comparisons. The A.A. life is best.

In bygone years there were extensive periods when I did not drink at all. I was then continuously sober longer than I have now been sober in A.A. And yet, I got drunk the first time I ever took a drink, which was at the age of 14. I got drunk the last time I ever took a drink, which was just before I came to A.A. I know I will get drunk the next time I ever take a drink, if I ever do. I do not know how long that next drunk would last, or whether I would live or be able to get back to A.A. again. Another drink of whiskey is not worth that chance.

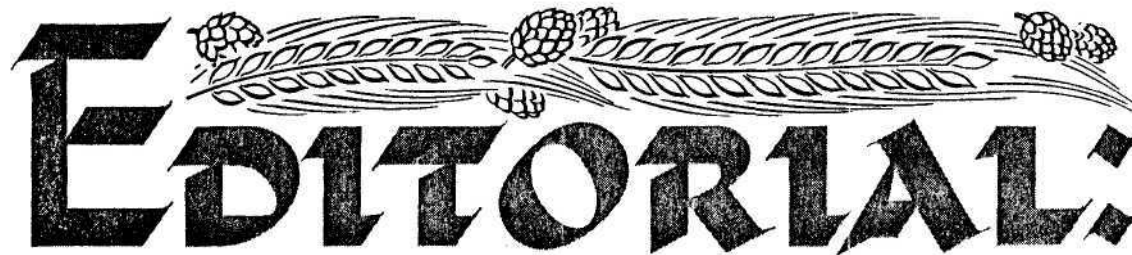
I believe I have had my lifetime quota of being drunk. Any alcoholic who feels that way about it is ready for A.A., and A.A. is ready for him. Any alcoholic who intends to do some more drinking is not ready for A.A., and A.A. cannot help him until he is ready. There is always the hope that he will change, if he lives long enough. Not all live that long. Meanwhile, there is plenty more misery for the alcoholic, and continued hell for his loved ones. Another drink of whiskey is not worth that.

I came to A.A. in about as wretched an alcoholic condition as anyone I know. I do not want to return to that. I can return by drinking again. My practice of the 12 Steps to the best of my understanding and ability is my only sure way of not drinking again.

During my years of drunkenness I gave myself much sorrow, and gave even more to others. During my years of total abstinence I had considerable happiness, and gave some to others. But I did *not* have something then that I *do* have now, in A.A.

I was just dry then, just not drinking, just on

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On the 11th Step . . .

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Many A.A.s, including the writer, have found this one of the most difficult of the 12 Steps.

It is easy to believe in a Power greater than ourselves—we have only to think of the inexplicable marvels of the universe—but it is hard to believe that we can interest this Power in our own insignificant needs through the medium of prayer and meditation.

Many of us have heard a newcomer say, "I can believe in His existence all right, but I can't swallow the idea that He will bother with a worm like me, or that he should!"

There's nothing wrong with this attitude; it is the beginning of an arrested alcoholic's true humility, and it leads right into the 11th Step, which may be approached experimentally. It may be approached on the "try it and see" basis.

No one is going to jam prayer and meditation down anyone's throat. It is a job that must be undertaken by the individual from his own desire and his own need. Perhaps he will fumble a little at first. Like every other worthwhile activity in this life, it requires a technique. One's own is the best. One shouldn't be confused by the form of address or even the content of the prayers in church. They are designed to encompass the general congregation. One's own prayer will be his individual way of consulting God, of stating his simple desire and hope for a better life. And his thanks.

The clue to the whole thing is contained in the very wise phrasing of the Step itself—"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God." This implies that everyone, to a greater or less degree, has, conscious contact with a Higher Power. That is exactly right. It could not be otherwise. All through our lives we have been more or less aware of a part of ourselves which was different from and superior to the obvious phenomena of nature.

Some people call it their better nature; others their will; still others call it that spark of divinity in each one of us which unites us to the whole Divine Principle. Terms are not important so long as we recognize the fact of "our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him." The things merely suggests that we *improve* that contact.

It is helpful to many to think of prayer and meditation as a consultation with the God within us. This makes it easy to reconcile prayer with the exercise of will power,

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Chicago Committee on Alcoholism Spurs Civic Interest

(This is the second in a series of articles reporting on various research and educational projects relating to alcoholism, now being carried on throughout the country under both private and public sponsorship, by official and non-official agencies.)

"One of the first things a man who wishes to cure himself of alcoholism must do is to recognize the fact that there is no cure."

These pragmatic words, especially meaningful to all members of A.A., were the opening paragraph of an article appearing in the July 20, 1947, issue of *The Chicago Sunday Tribune*. The article closed with the following note:

"The Chicago Committee on Alcoholism, through its vice president, Walter O. Cromwell, is prepared to supply information to excessive drinkers seeking medical, psychiatric, or institutional care. The committee also can arrange contacts with Alcoholics Anonymous. Mr. Cromwell's address is 816 Halsted Street and his phone number is Monroe 0135."

* * *

The Chicago Committee on Alcoholism is one type of agency set up in recent years to deal with the problem of alcoholism directly, to promote public education on the subject and to stimulate research.

Wide Representation

Members of the committee include representatives of medicine, psychiatry, law, religion, social work, industry and labor. As outlined in the original statement of its purposes and policies, issued at the time of the committee's formation in October, 1946, the objectives of this group are based upon three premises:

(1) Alcoholism is a serious problem; (2) alcoholism can be treated successfully; (3) the development of addiction to alcohol can be prevented.

In support of the premise that alcoholics can be treated successfully, the committee's statement pointed out: "During the past decade we have struggled to break the bonds of prejudice toward the alcoholic and pessimism regarding his treatment. Alcoholics Anonymous have led the way in showing that alcoholics can be helped; the augmented usefulness of thousands of their members demonstrates they are worth helping. A small number of devoted scholars, physicians and laymen have begun to lay the foundations of a scientific approach toward the problems of alcoholic addiction and its treatment.

"Even under our present limitations of knowledge and experience regarding the treatment of alcoholics," the statement continued, "we are

finding that many of them can be helped."

Chairman of the Chicago Committee is Dr. Anton J. Carlson, who is also president and scientific director of the Research Council on Problems of Alcohol, an independent agency with headquarters in New York, which is seeking to coordinate the various research activities underway in the United States and to provide a means for correlating and disseminating the knowledge accumulated through their work. Dr.

THE CLIP SHEET

Excerpts from the Public Press

Portland, Me., *Express*: "Judge Armand O. LeBlanc of the Westbrook Municipal Court today was of the belief that the present all-time record of addiction to alcohol in this country could be traced to the passage of the prohibition act. Speaking at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, Judge LeBlanc said that the Volstead Act was a 'horror of laws.' He said the act attempted to legislate the morals of the citizens."

* * *

Philadelphia, Pa., *Bulletin*: "Helpful hand of Alcoholics Anonymous is stretching out with new determination to help the Philadelphia addict. Campaign has been launched to instruct personnel managers, plant superintendents, office bosses, etc., how to deal with the Monday morning stayouters, hangover boys and those who slip away from work for a quick one at every opportunity. All these they consider potential alcoholics, if not already full-fledged. Cooperation with executives as well as whiskey distributors, taproom and cafe proprietors, has been excellent, according to report."

* * *

Charleston, W. Va., *Mail*: "Let us this Friday afternoon give a deep bow to members of the organization called Alcoholics Anonymous. All of them once looked too long and too well into the frosted amber of forgetfulness. Unlike some others, they did not let the vanity of alcoholic splendors prove permanently hypnotic. They kicked off the self-persecuted ego of the rum-ridden Narcissus, got up and walked away from the mirror reflecting their own poor selves and fought their way back to respectable sobriety again."

Carlson is professor emeritus of physiology at the University of Chicago.

The Chicago Committee offers four proposals for action on the problem in Chicago:

(1) A consultation center for alcoholics offering preliminary diagnostic service and direction to treatment facilities should be established.

(2) A program of public education on the nature of alcohol addiction, its results and its treatment, utilizing all possible media of communication, should be developed.

(3) Additional facilities for treatment will be needed. Experience gained through operation of the consultation center will serve as a basis for determination of the nature of facilities which must be established in order to provide more adequate treatment and treatment for more people.

(4) We need to know more about alcoholism. In conjunction with the consultation center and any new treatment facilities which may be established, a comprehensive program of scientific research in all aspects of the problem should be initiated.

Portal House Described

The Chicago Department of Welfare's Portal House is one of the agencies with which the Chicago Committee on Alcoholism is cooperating. Reporting recently on the work being done at Portal House, *The Chicago Daily News* said:

"Seven men with seven stories and seven loves for liquor today completed the first phase of a new course of treatment for alcoholism at Portal House, 5059 Vincennes Avenue. The result: Seven men with futures. A month ago the seven were drunkards. Every morning was the 'morning after.' Every 'morning after' called for a new round of drinks. There was no future. Today they sat around a table in Portal House and reported on the Chicago Department of Welfare's experiment in treatment of alcoholics. They told of the month-long program of psychological and medical treatment. Being men of bitter experiences, they had some wise words to offer. Their words, in part: 'We're not cured. We'll always be drunks. It's just that we're not drinking today. Tomorrow? We'll see about that in the morning. We're in pretty good shape now. A month ago we were a mess. This must be the 'right road.' Members of Alcoholics Anonymous are cooperating in the come-back program."

The Chicago Committee on Alcoholism is incorporated, not-for-profit, under the laws of the State of Illinois and is supported by voluntary contributions.

LITTLE ROCK PLAN GIVES PROSPECTS CLOSE ATTENTION

(Following is another of the reports published from time to time by The A.A. Grapevine on group methods and techniques. The reports, in addition to correlating information on group activities, show how varied are the methods and techniques followed by different groups in different parts of the country and how policies which might not work in one area do work in another.)

From Little Rock, Ark.

Greater Little Rock A.A. was seven years old last March and has helped establish most of the groups within the state. More than five hundred men and women have been initiated into A.A. through the Little Rock Approach Plan since its creation seven years ago when five men got together and began to use the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which had just been published.

It is interesting to note that of these men, the founders of the movement here, all are alive and only one ever had a relapse. They are living, walking proof of the statement that "it works."

Records Carefully Kept

The Little Rock Plan was, we believe, the first of its kind in the country. By adhering strictly to the "Plan" hundreds have been brought into A.A. and because this group has kept accurate records and statistics, we can report that our success is better than the national average of 75%—or to put it another way, our "slip" record is lower than the 25% expected and reported from other groups over the country.

It is not easy to become a member of this group. When a person has expressed a desire to achieve sobriety and has had a sponsor appointed for him, he must leave his work or position for at least two weeks. Usually the prospect is required to spend that entire time within the confines of the club rooms, studying, preparing a case history, meeting and filling assignments laid out by the sponsor.

If, after two weeks, he has discharged his assignments to the satisfaction of his sponsor, he is brought before the executive committee and there his request for membership is presented by his sponsor in his presence. In some instances, because of the peculiarity of his case, he may not be admitted for varying periods as high as six months in some cases. However, if he is deemed eligible by the committee, he is brought before the next meeting, receives a warm welcome, is handed a copy of the "Approach Program" and the 12 Steps.

This is not all, however. We do not simply say, "Now here you are, you have had it all, go your way. and may God bless you." No, we do not cut him off in mid-air, so to speak. We give

The Pleasures of Reading

People in Quandaries, by Wendell Johnson (Harper & Bros., \$3.75)

This is an extremely pertinent book, simple enough for most laymen's comprehension. *People, in Quandaries* is written for the widest possible reading public: People in quandaries—this means you!

The problems with which this strangely articulate psychologist copes are those which floor us all, day after day, as we strive to live at peace with ourselves and with one another in a world growing more complicated hourly! Dr. Johnson's angle on such problems of personal adjustment is sharply direct, and soundly practical. Elaborating upon the thesis that "man is the only creature able to talk himself into difficulties that would not otherwise exist," he makes it perfectly plain that the "language of maladjustment" affects not only individuals, alcoholic or otherwise, but entire classes of society.

Surely it has occurred to many that their maladjustments to current tempos may spring from their failure to understand and use words and symbols to their own advantage. Such maladjustments fundamentally are at the base of home, community, school, business, national, and world problems.

The first part of this clearly written book explains in general terms what semantics signify, and is recommended heartily as an inoculation for the beginner. About 20 pages suggest research problems in the individual's own language habits as a sound method for approaching personal problems.

Having done this, Dr. Johnson makes equally clear the "language of adjustment"—the ways of using words and other symbols which make for personal growth and social progress. The reader who would wish something more practical must realize that semantics already has brought us tremendous gifts in the realm of personal communications—but that painstaking groundwork in the field of pure science must precede exposition.

Of particular importance is Dr. Johnson's analysis of the language of science, in connection with which he describes science as a general method—"a way of life, no less"—which can be used not only by research workers in their laboratories, but by people everywhere, every moment of their daily lives. He contrasts our pre-scientific habits with the scientific ways of behavior essential for adjustment, if not peace, in the atomic age.

"Only in our more stately mansions," he warns, "may refuge still be found." He provides detailed directions for moving into the "more stately mansions" of our own souls, and for learning how to live in the marbled halls of the mind.

Dr. Johnson is, as was his 18th century namesake, a stickler for the exact word. He permits his enthusiasm to make him understress many non-semantic features of personal maladjustments, such as psychological and temperamental influences caused by the shattering impacts of traumatic episodes in individual lives. Furthermore, he seems to be overly sanguine about getting people to change the errors of their ways. However, the positive values of *People in Quandaries* far outbalance its minor defects.

With its fluid and engrossing style, this book makes rewarding reading. Dr. Johnson has presented, clearly and interestingly, the case for a new clinical interpretation of what his book subtitled *The Semantics of Personal Adjustment*.—R.E.B., Greenwich Village, New York City.

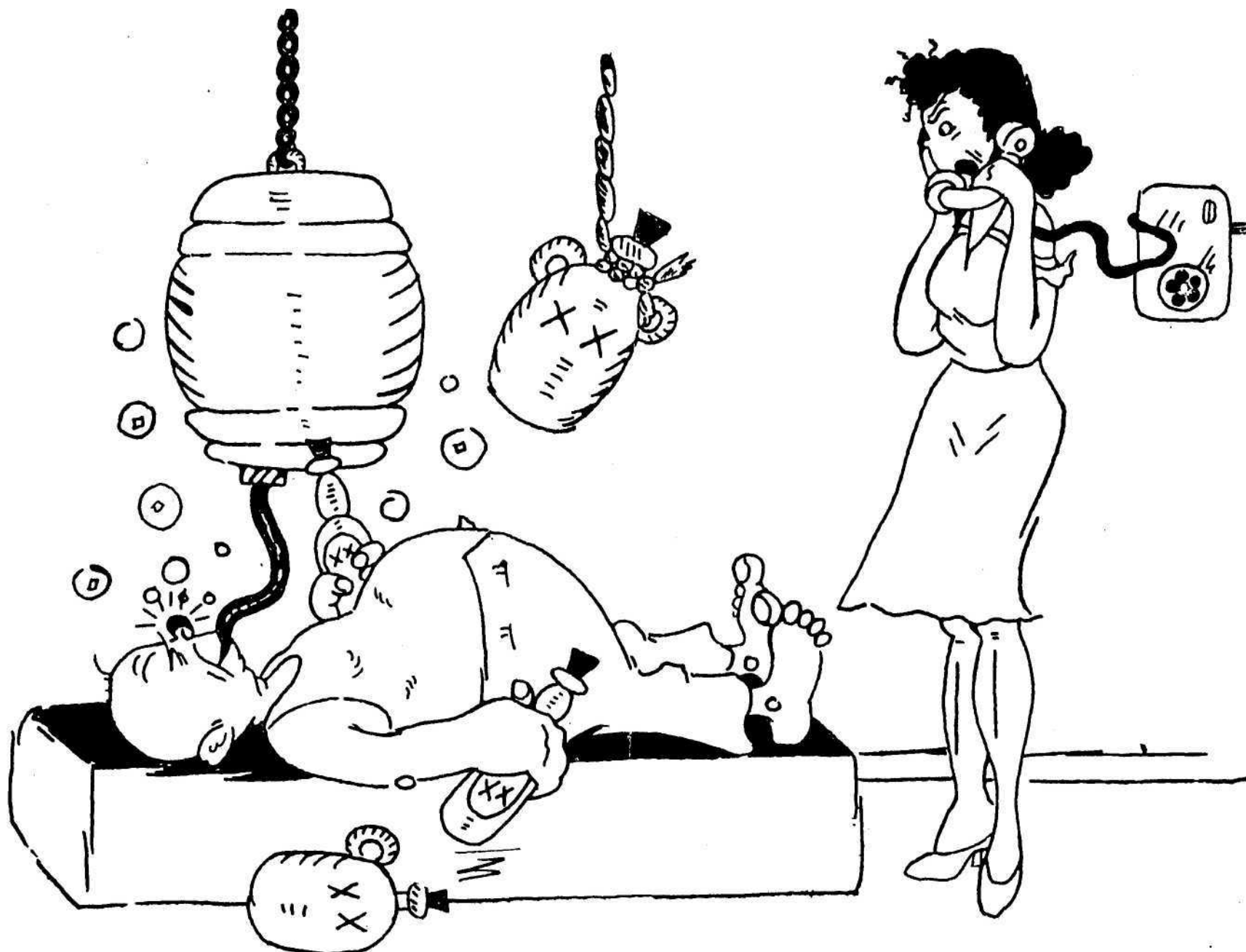
him a small diary and ask that each day thereafter for 28 days, he record his impressions of the day, any event, whether a happy one or a sad one, and enter therein, "I have not taken a drink this day," and sign his name.

At the end of this period he returns the diary to the club, is again welcomed and is admitted to full membership, the privilege of the ballot and an unrestricted part in the activities of the fellowship. He is then assigned to a squad, given some definite task, and encouraged to work, guided by some older member, with new prospects.

In dealing with the new man, there are other procedures. First of all, in addition to being required to adhere strictly to the assignment?

required by his sponsor, he serves his apprenticeship in what is known as "The Prospect Squad." Here he learns from a squad leader various phases of the work of A.A., mingles with other neophytes, hears their experiences and contributes his own. If he needs guidance or advice this is where he gets it, along with other new men, seeking the way out.

There is the "slip squad," where the man who has suffered a setback, no matter how severe or how light, must serve from two weeks to six months before he is again recognized as a full-fledged member. Often the slippee is assigned tougher, more strenuous assignments than when he first was admitted. Here he discusses the slip freely with those men, who like himself, have



"Hello! Is this Alcoholics Anonymous? Well, will you please come and talk to my husband? I'm afraid drinking is beginning to interfere with his life."

"missed the boat" somewhere down the line. He tries to find out why he made the mistake and learns again that "to err is only human" and that a slip in the beginning is not uncommon, certainly not fatal.

The executive committee is comprised of representatives from each squad. The squads meet once a week on nights other than the regular meeting and transact the actual business of the Fellowship.

We spend much time in planning and executing the new man's graduation from the freshman stage. We carry him slowly and carefully through the "Prospect Squad"; admit him to membership; keep our contacts with him through that critical period, the first month or so, through his daily diary; put him in a squad after he becomes a full member and then if he slips, put

him through again (and again if necessary) by way of the "Slip Squad."

Credit is due the state Hospital and Fort Roots, one of the Southwest's largest veterans' hospitals, where we have complete cooperation from the entire staff of doctors and psychiatrists. From Fort Roots especially, come more and more men, having been told by the psychiatrists, "We can do nothing more for you, your best bet is A.A. It works." The courts of law in Arkansas in general and Little Rock in particular without exception lend a willing ear and helping hand to unfortunates who stand before the court and even so much as intimate that they would like to quit drinking. While we have gone far and progressed much, no small amount of credit is due to all these factors plus the altitude of all business men of this city.—G.H.B.

Foreign-Language Listing Set Up in Cleveland

Since Cleveland is one of the largest centers of foreign born population in the United States, there are many calls at the Cleveland District Office for A.A. contacts in languages other than English. To meet this need the Cleveland Office is building up a foreign language contact service so that the calls can be promptly answered. During the past few months the office has received requests for contacts in German, French, Polish, Lithuanian, Greek, Roumanian, Hungarian and Czech. The office was able to supply all of these except the Roumanian, but learned on investigation that the Roumanian understood Hungarian well enough to make communication possible in that language!

A.A. Sobriety Opens Door to Spiritual Growth

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the wagon. Now I am not just dry, not just not drinking, not just on the wagon. I am now a sober alcoholic doing my honest best to live the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I do not always succeed, but I have continued to try. That way, I have been able not to take the first drink.

And that way I have found in A.A. more peace of mind and inner tranquility than I ever had before. It is based upon a simple and humble effort to harmonize my life with the purposes of the Higher Power, as I try to understand them and Him. I had wanted some such spiritual conception all my life, during both my drinking years and my non-drinking years. I sought it, too, in my groping fashion. In vain.

I had to become a drunkard and seek sobriety before I found A.A., and I had to find A.A. before I found what for me is the God I had sought without success.

No License Over Others

I have been a pretty hard-boiled newspaper man all my life. I have never been identified with any religious sect, creed or denomination, and am not now. I am not a prohibitionist, temperance crank, religious fanatic, reformer, uplifter or crusader. A.A. is none of those things. I may have become an Alcoholics Anonymous fanatic. I like that better than being an alcohol fanatic—and far from anonymous about it—which is what I was before.

I do not feel that A.A. has given me a warrant to become arbiter of any other person's life, or a license to try to take charge of his affairs. I do not feel privileged to anoint myself or polish my halo, just because I have tried to practice the 12 Steps and thereby stayed sober. What has occurred is that a Supreme Power has operated. That is miraculous enough, but it qualifies me for no medal. All I have done is supply an honest desire and make an honest effort.

And I do not feel that the 12th Step gives me a commission to try to be bigger than God in another person's alcoholic problem. My own life became unmanageable. I am powerless over alcohol. A.A. teaches me that only a Power greater than myself can restore me to sanity. It does not teach me that I, who am powerless over my own alcoholism, have power over Jimmy's alcoholism. I do not know how to stay sober without God's help, and I do not know how Jimmy can stay sober without God's help. I must tell Jimmy that I cannot help him unless he will ask God to help him. And I can help Jimmy most by not taking that first drink my-

self. The *first* step of any 12th Step work I can do is to stay sober on the A.A. program myself. Doing that, I may be able to influence a fellow alcoholic to try being honest with himself.

Self-honesty is the basis and the essence of the program. No one gets on the program by continuing to drink, and continuing to call it "another little slip." When he faces the fact that he has not honestly taken The 1st Step, he has a chance of really starting in A.A. We do not get on the A.A. program by starting out to prove that the 1st Step is a joke, and that God is surplus in the 12 Steps. We do not get on this program of self-honesty by commencing it with self-dishonesty. Being dishonest with one's self in A.A. is not slipping. It is not starling. It is not being anywhere from which to slip.

That is why some who come to A.A. still have to undergo terrific alcoholic punishment before they *will* finally admit that they are licked by alcohol, and before they *can* become capable of the absolute fundamental self-honesty which the Steps require.

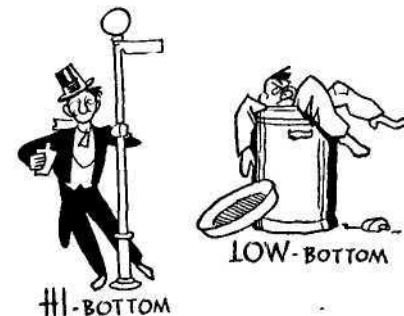
That is the crux of the matter. Until an alcoholic really believes he is bested by Barleycorn, honestly recognizes alcoholic defeat, and honestly desires A.A.'s answer, which is based upon the operation of a Higher Power, he is not qualified or equipped to start the A.A. program successfully. He commences being qualified and equipped when he commences being honest with himself.

Faith Can Be Cultivated

In addition to self-honesty, A.A. is based upon hope, faith and effort. All who come to A.A. have hope. Mine was merged with despair. But hope is always there, in A.A. That hope grows into faith for those who continue to come to A.A., make a steady effort during those foggy first days to understand A.A., and who try to resist cynicism in the beginning. Faith can be cultivated within the spirit, just as certainly as muscles can be developed within the body. Many thousands of A.A.s have proved that. Any alcoholic can do the same.

But he will have to make an honest and persistent effort, and start with an honest desire. He will have to try to live the 12 Steps, not just fool around with some of them now and then.

No one can live all the Steps perfectly all the time. But all of us *can* try. The sober alcoholic who is practicing A.A. as best he can finds a new way of life that is happier than anything he had dared dream of before. Indeed, he finds a new way of life that is fairer by far than anything that millions of persons, alcoholic or not, are ever privileged to experience at all.—Pete D.



Letters are pouring into the office in response to the "Best Hiding Place" contest. One member, in a Victoria, British Columbia, Group, wrote that he hid his bottle under a potted palm. He reports that his wife watered the palm frequently "working havoc with the label." Another member in a Savannah, Ga., Group successfully hid the bottle in his mother-in-law's shoes. This member added that he "hid himself as often as he hid his bottle, the favorite place for himself being under his mother-in-law's bed." Other interesting repositories reported to date: behind the mantelpiece; in the medicine cabinet among the prescription bottles; in the Witch Hazel bottle; under the attic flooring; in a shaving mug; in a gas mask; inside the flush tank of the water closet; behind the bath tub. A member, from a Yonkers, N. Y., Group, solved the problem of remembering where he hid the bottle by writing notes to himself in shorthand!

* * *

We're off to a good start with this contest so send in your favorite hiding places. Just address your letter to the Bottom's Up Editor, in care of *The A.A. Grapevine*, Box 328, Grand Central Annex, New York. Incidentally, send along any other of your odd, humorous, unusual or exciting A.A. experiences for this column.

Next month we'll begin publishing the "Best Hiding Place" contest letters in full and the staff artists will prepare illustrations of some of the best.

* * *

From an Outwood, Ky., member comes the story of a young alcoholic who lived with his old maid sisters. At the end of each binge he would come home declaring that this time surely he was going to die. The sisters, having used every means possible to get him to stop drinking, finally decided that the next time he got drunk they would convince him that he really was going to die. The next time he arrived home drunk, the sisters put him to bed and

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A.A. Utilizes Factors Inherent In Our Makeup

From Montclair, N. J.

I

Many of us are content, without question, to accept Alcoholics Anonymous for what it appears to be, namely, a fellowship of alcoholics which has had extraordinary success in releasing its members from the mortifying grip of alcoholism by assisting them to lead lives socially useful and spiritually rewarding. However, some systematic analysis of factors present in the problem with which this organization deals may serve to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of those inclined to philosophical or metaphysical speculation. Such an inquiry may also be of utility and significance in revealing the possibilities and the limitations of a therapy, fundamentally psychological and spiritual. The following outline, necessarily brief, is intended to be suggestive and not conclusive, partial and not complete, tentative and not definitive.

It is impossible to dissect the human personality. Imponderables cannot be weighed and any analysis of individuality has its obvious limitations. The methodology of the scientist or the technique of the accountant are alike inappropriate in the examination of a man's soul or the evaluation of his character. Nonetheless, we recognize that in the alcoholic we are to a degree dealing with a specific type—a particular brand of neurotic—marked with definite peculiarities. However much we may generalize and say that these qualities are characteristic of all neurotics, and, indeed, are universal, we may find our understanding enlightened and our usefulness enhanced if we limit our investigation to the alcoholic as such.

The alcoholic eludes precise description. But some sort of working definition is helpful to an orderly, if unscientific, discussion. Provisionally, then, let us say that the person we are dealing with is an egocentric, defiant, narcissistic, self-sufficient individuality, supreme in his own domain, brooking interference by neither God nor man—or, more simply, a neurotic with an obsessional tendency—suffering a malady which is malignant, progressive and mortal.

Thus to state a proposition goes far to supply an answer to the problem inherent therein, and we can begin to see the reason for the lack of success of medicine and psychiatry in this field, preoccupied as they have been with superficial manifestations rather than basic causes. So those medical men, most experienced and knowledgeable, say, as Dr. Jung has said, that a vital spiritual experience is essential to effect a recovery; or, as Dr. Tiebout has observed that a spiritual force is used to attack the fundamental narcissism of the alcoholic; or, as Dr. Silkworth

has stated, that an effort must be made to resolve the moral issue.

What the alcoholic, then, must remember, to paraphrase a statement from DuNouy's *Human Destiny*, is that the struggle against alcoholism has been transposed from the material onto the spiritual plane and that his own dignity, his nobility as a human being, must emerge from his efforts to liberate himself from his bondage and to obey his deepest aspirations. The distinguished biologist adds:

"And let (the alcoholic) above all never forget that the divine spark is in him, in him alone, and that he is free to disregard it, to kill it, or to come closer to God by showing his eagerness to work with Him, and for Him."

"To come closer to God" is another way of describing his "spiritual experience" which is "more than purely a psychological phenomenon



"I don't need A.A. I can lick it by myself."

arising only from his own resources" (say the authors of *Alcoholics Anonymous*). It is to have a "recurrence of birth" (what the Greeks call "palingenesis"), more simply and most significantly represented by the words of Jesus to Nicodemus when he said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

But it is difficult to contact a person unless one has an affinity or something in common with him. Our conception of the duality of man's nature, human and divine, has obstructed as often as promoted our union with the Higher Power—usually because the idea has become enmeshed in the technical vocabulary of theology and metaphysics. At this point, assistance

to our understanding comes from a rather unexpected source, the now familiar monumental *A Study of History*, by that most scientific of world historians, A. J. Toynbee, who says:

"We may find an alternative starting point in the postulate that the divine nature, in so far as it is accessible to us, must have something in common with our own; and, if we look for one particular spiritual faculty which we are conscious of possessing and which we can attribute with absolute confidence to God . . . then the faculty which we shall think of first as being common to man and God will be one which the philosophers wish to mortify; and that is the faculty of Love. This stone which both Zeno and Gautama have so obstinately rejected is become the head of the corner of the temple of the New Testament."

II

What does the beginner bring to A.A. in the way of liabilities which handicap and assets which aid his attempt to achieve that regeneration which will both rid him of his alcoholism and start him on the road to his proper destiny?

On the debit side there is, among other things, the matter of will power, the lack of which is frequently said to be the root of the alcoholic's trouble. And it is undeniably true, that the active alcoholic when in the grip of the alcoholic obsession, seems powerless to reject a drink. But as has been suggested in an earlier discussion (*A.A. Grapevine*, April, 1947), there is the power of volition which has never been lost, namely, the ability to make the initial decision represented by the 1st Step of the Program; witness the thousands of "condemned" alcoholics who have made the choice. Moreover, our whole philosophy is predicated on the proposition that man is a free moral agent, otherwise there could be no moral responsibility.

Yet, in respect of daily action as well as ultimate goals, the will appears to be atrophied to a large extent. It cannot be reactivated, however, on the false theory that the will is a separated or insulated organ that can be treated by a "muscular" therapy. The will is a composite faculty, a union of the soul's energies, requiring for its fullest exercise the proper motivation, guidance and direction. Self-examination which reveals debris to be cleaned out, the adoption of new altitudes towards old values and the establishment of new aims and objectives will bring about the complete liberation of the will and the release from alcoholic bondage which permit a person to attain his highest destiny. The catalogue of things to be done sounds formidable but

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Half-a-Man A Year Ago Now Does Work of Many In Salisbury, N. C. Group

We started our group here in Salisbury, N. C. November 6, 1946, with what we called five and one-half members! This *half member* had just come off a terrible three-weeks' bender and was so shaky we told him he really didn't count as a whole member. But, believe me, he counts now. He has enjoyed complete sobriety since then, and has brought many members to our group. During our ten months of existence, more than fifty alcoholics have joined us. Not all of them stuck, but the majority did. Some of these have moved away or have traveling jobs which prevent their taking an active part in our group work, but they are sober and giving credit to A.A. More than two dozen of us are wearing A.A. pins which means that the wearers have three or more months of sobriety to their credit.

Our success and growth has been due to several factors. In the first place, two of our charter members had commuted weekly to join and meet with the Charlotte, N. C., Group for about five months prior to starting a group in Salisbury. Thus many friends from there came on the double to help us organize here, and in the succeeding months have visited and talked with us on numerous occasions.

The editor of our local paper has given us limitless amounts of the right sort of publicity.

Even during the acute shortage of newsprint the always found space for anything concerning A.A. His wife is program director of WSTP, Salisbury's radio station, and has contributed hours and hours of free station time for A.A. transcriptions and announcements. They could not have been more cooperative had they been members of the group.

Our courts and police force have "leaned over backward" to give us an opportunity to help alcoholics who had come within their jurisdiction wherever there was the slightest indication that the individuals involved really wanted help with their drinking problems. We secured privileges to visit and help at the county workhouse, something that was hitherto unheard of.

Letters of commendation and encouragement have come from almost all the ministers and clubs and fraternities in our locality.

Three of our fellows went to Cleveland in June for the convention. One of these, a man who is handicapped by having only one leg, wanted to go so much that he hitched rides up there! His drinking career prior to joining A.A. had cost him a great deal and as he had been making amends financially as well as in other

(Continued on Page 10)



"Carry me out to the car, George. Once I get my hands on the wheel I can drive all right."

A.A. Grapevine Recommended as 12th Step Aid

From Macon, Ga, comes a letter with a suggestion which has been made with increasing frequency of late:

"I think it would be nice if you would have an article sometime suggesting *The A.A. Grapevine* as a gift to the loved one or friend of the reader. I don't know of any gift so nice for any alcoholic.—K.R."

Many other A.A.s have been getting the same idea and subscribing to *The A.A. Grapevine* for a friend, or relative, and even more often for some A.A. member who happened to come in at low tide financially. They report that it's not only "a nice thing to do," but that the idea also offers a number of highly practical benefits.

Older members of A.A. use their national periodical as a medium for sharing thoughts and experiences with other members all over the world, for group discussion topics, for watching A.A. growth and for keeping up on A.A. news, trends and policies. New members get a considerable amount of instruction from the magazine. In the editorials on the 12 Steps they find the studied opinion of older members applied to the operating backbone of the Recovery Program. In the letters appearing in "Mail Call" they find firsthand accounts of personal problems similar to their own. In the general articles they find still other experiences of benefit to them, while in "The Pleasures of Reading" they can keep up on helpful books. The new department, "the Reference Library,"

furnishes technical or specific information and "The Clip Sheet" general information, on the common problem.

A subscription to *The A.A. Grapevine* is known to have been the means sometimes of bringing a straying member back into the fold. Even where he has severed all other contacts with the group, the magazine pursues him unobtrusively, carrying a monthly reminder that help awaits—a silent but eloquent call to come back.

A number of members also have used gift subscriptions as one way of helping relatives and friends to gain a better understanding of the problem of alcoholism and A.A. This technique tends to make it easier for the A.A. to rehabilitate himself with his non-alcoholic friends and kin.

In one case, a non-alcoholic wife who had pulled out before the alcoholic husband came into A.A., returned after he sent her three issues. His letters about A.A. had left her skeptical, but the testimony she saw here convinced her that he had really found something.

. . . and so we have written the story . . . as requested . . . suggesting that giving *The A.A. Grapevine*, the national periodical of Alcoholics Anonymous, to someone in addition to reading it yourself, is a form of 12th Step work.

At least the word should be passed to all A.A.s that *The A.A. Grapevine* is about them, by them, for them and is available to them.

A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Mark First Year—The Fellowship Group of Windsor, Vt., held its first anniversary dinner July 19, with 118 in attendance. Guests came from St. Johnshury, Montpelier, Burlington, St. Albans, Bethel, Lyme, Randolph, Bennington and Rutland, and guest speakers from Haverhill, Mass., South Orange, N. J., Mt. Kisco, N. Y., and the New York City Seamen's Group.

Cleveland Troupers Plan New Show—Though performances of the musical revue staged far and wide by Cleveland A.A.s have been curtailed during the summer months, members are busy planning a new show to take to the local boards in the fall. The show was originally the outgrowth of a purely amateur stunt night program last February. An invitation from another group to repeat the 30-minute revue led to more requests, and the show was polished and expanded and engagements were played in many nearby towns. The show has not been used as a money-raising venture, but purely for its entertainment value and fun.

Growth Keeps Pace—As the population of Houston, Texas, continues to expand, so too, do the A.A. activities there. Group No. 2 was formed less than five months ago, with an initial membership of 17, which has now grown to 47 active participants. Meetings are held twice weekly in the Parish house of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, and the rent for the hall is donated to the alcoholic ward of St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital which will be part of the medical center to be constructed in Houston. Among the speakers at the open Monday night meetings have been prominent physicians, judges and others. The closed sessions on Thursday are given over to round-table discussions of the 12 Steps. Sometimes the discussions follow the form of the "Information, Please" radio program, with four of the older members answering questions submitted by others as to their interpretations of the A.A. program. Saturday evening parties in members' homes have helped members of the group to become better acquainted.

Advertising Pays—In last month's *A.A. Grapevine* there was a brief item about an ad run in the San Bernadino, Cal., newspaper by the lone A.A. woman in the city, asking that others interested communicate with her. Now she reports that the Women's A.A. of San Bernadino was organized at a meeting June 18 in the Y.W.C.A. with seven active members attending! An open meeting on July 2 attracted 20, and the chairman, herself an A.A., lead the

meeting by passing out papers for questions about the program, and she and a non-alcoholic woman who has been helpful in establishing the group both provided answers. Others who have offered their assistance include a clergyman and a physician. The editor of the daily newspaper has cooperated by running weekly items about the meetings.

Nurses Hear A.A.s—Two members of the San Antonio, Texas, Group responded to a call from the City Health Nurses to make talks before that group. The San Antonio Group, now numbering 140, finds increasing support for its activities from city officials and law enforcement agencies, it reports. During the past few weeks, San Antonians have entertained visitors from Chicago, Denver, Minneapolis, Oklahoma City, Chattanooga, Mexico City and several other Texas groups in the new clubrooms in the heart of the business district. One of the members has organized a Thursday night discussion group for men on various aspects of the program and pertinent reading. The first book read and discussed was *Alcohol—One Man's Meal*. Another new venture in San Antonio has been the inauguration of a meeting for wives of members, at the same time the members hold closed meetings. Two copies of *Alcoholics Anonymous* have been placed in wards of the State Hospital and two others in the San Antonio Public Library.

Winonans Advertise, Too—The A.A. Group in Winona, Minn., runs a classified ad daily in the *Republican-Herald*, the local newspaper, changing the wording every six or eight weeks. The current ad has read: "Is drinking a problem that is affecting you domestically, socially, economically, and physically? Possibly we can help you. Write Alcoholics Anonymous, P.O. Box 122. No treatment, confidential, no dues." Twenty members from Winona were among 300 who attended the first anniversary dinner of the Alano society of Rochester (Minn.) A.A. in July.

Georgians Get Around—Members of the Atlanta, Ga., Group have been active lately in aiding in the establishment of new groups. One member on vacation in Selma, Ala., felt the need for a group there and helped form one. Another started a group in the Lawson Veterans' Administration Hospital with the cooperation of the psychiatric staff. In answer to a request from Athens, Ga., another went there and assisted in getting a group underway. Atlanta plans to invite several of these nearby groups to conduct some of its meetings this fall and winter.

Elbow Bending A.A. Style—The Monday following the picnic held by the Kingsport, Johnson City and Bristol, Tenn., Groups, several members sported sore right arms, in this case the result of horseshoe pitching, so the "hangovers" were fairly painless. The picnic was held during the summer at the Tri-City airport, and there was ham, chicken, coffee, coke and watermelon. The three groups plan more of these get-togethers.

Notes From Correspondents—Next month, the Duluth, Minn., Group will be two years old, starting with a nucleus of three on Oct. 2, 1945, it now numbers over 200. Duluth helped start groups in Superior, Wis., and several other neighboring towns. . . . Erie, Pa., now boasts six groups, with meetings every week night, and on Sunday a meeting of the men's training class. . . . Patients, members, or employees are invited to regular Wednesday night meetings of the Los Angeles Veterans' Administration A.A. Group in the Gray Ladies' Hut. . . . An A.A. Group has been formed at Grenada, Miss., with ten at the first meeting, some of them coming from Greenwood. The Grenada address is P.O. Box 1010.

Overflow Crowd—Although none of the speakers was introduced by name, an overflow crowd jammed the Little Theatre of the Sacramento (Calif.) memorial auditorium to attend the first open meeting staged by the Sacramento A.A. Group. A businessman, a housewife, an insurance man and a shoe salesman told the audience, which included clergymen, physicians, judges, nurses and other interested persons, how they had arrested the disease of alcoholism through following the A.A. program. A.A.s from the vicinity got together following the meeting at the clubhouse.

Milwaukee Women Organize—A women's group has been formed by A.A. in Milwaukee, with meetings every other Wednesday in the Alano Club at 1012 North 3rd Street. The Alano Club is now 16 months old, and occupies a suite of six rooms in downtown Milwaukee.

Dr. Jellinek A Visitor—Dr. E. M. Jellinek of the Yale University School of Alcohol Studies was a surprise visitor to the 1947 Texas state Conference of A.A. held in Austin during the summer. The biggest event in A.A. history in Texas, the two-day meeting was attended by approximately 400 A.A.s representing 25 groups.

(Continued on next page)

ROCHESTER, MINN. GROUP MARKS FIRST ANNIVERSARY

On July 27 the Rochester, Minn., Group played host to 300 members and friends of this and nearby communities. Attending the first anniversary banquet and reception were representatives from Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Fort Dodge, Waterloo, Waverly, Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, and Monticello, Iowa; La Crosse, Sparta and Eau Claire, Wisconsin; and Owatonna, Blooming Prairie, Hastings, Mankato, Caledonia, St. Paul, Faribault, Winona, West Concord, Grand Meadow, Wykoff, Fountain, Stillwater and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Local representatives of the judiciary, clergy, social agencies and of medicine as well as other interested friends were also in attendance.

Following a message of welcome by Lou B. of the Rochester Group and an introduction by toastmaster Andy A., H. A. R. of Eau Claire, Wis., better known as Rip, gave a thought-provoking message built around what he termed the two phases of A.A.

In explaining the two phases of A.A., Rip pointed out that in the first phase the man gets A.A. and that in the second phase A.A. gets the man. The first phase represents knowledge of A.A. as outlined in the 12 Steps whereas the second phase represents the practice of the 12 Steps; in phase one the A.A. serves himself, in phase two he serves others; in phase one he acknowledges God, in phase two he worships God. Rip stressed the point that the surest way to reach phase two was through action and through development of A.A. ideals which he listed as charity, faith and humility.

Following are other highlights of Rip's message which we wish to pass on:

"In the University of A.A. there are no graduates—all are students."

"Alcoholics Anonymous have won a war by

News Circuit

Members from Austin, Dallas, Houston, Fort Worth, Schulenberg, Seminole, Waco, San Antonio, Taylor, Nacogdoches and New York City spoke at the various meetings. There were also movies and recorded talks by Bill and Marty M.

60 At First Open Meeting—The Calcasieu Parish Group held its first open meeting at Lake Charles, La., in July, with M. H. of Memphis as the guest speaker and 20 A.A.s and about 40 friends and relatives attending. Not only have several calls been received by the group since the meeting; the newspaper announcement of it also brought forth a couple who were formerly affiliated with the Kansas City, Kan., and Corpus Christ! Groups, and didn't know of the existence of a chapter in their new home.

giving up the struggle—and surrendering to A.A. principles of life."

"Alcoholics Anonymous have won a battle against the greatest enemy of man—man himself."

"We are gathered here to celebrate a miracle performed, not by science, not by the wisdom of man, not by will power, not by tragedy or the pleas of mothers, wives and friends, not by any human agency, but by the 12 Steps of A.A. which constitute the stairway to lasting sobriety and peace of mind."

"Humility lowers a man to his proper size without degrading him."

"Good ideas will make you money, but good ideals will make you happy."

The meeting was also addressed by Pat C. of the Minneapolis group and by local representatives of the clergy, the judiciary and medicine.

Pat C. also represented the Mid-West Council on Alcoholism, and introduced the visiting groups from other communities.

Dr. Harold Trost, representing the clergy, stated that in the past the church had found itself quite impotent in dealing with the problem of alcoholism and that whatever success was gained was usually of short duration. He praised the ideals of A.A., stating that they could be made fit subjects for many sermons.

Dr. M. N. Walsh of the Mayo Clinic, representing medicine and psychiatry, likened his experience with alcoholism to his experiences with the medical corps of the army in the theatres of action. He stated that he could minister to the physical and mental ills of the men in service, but against destruction in battle he was quite helpless. So also he felt inadequate to the task of combatting the ravages and destruction caused by alcoholism. Dr. Walsh stated that A.A. has taught psychiatry many things about the value of group therapy and has given suggestions for the treatment of other psychiatric disorders.

Judge Vernon E. Gates of the District Court stated that throughout his service on the bench it has been his duty to commit many persons to penal or correctional institutions, and in many cases he has recommended that if a solution could be found for their alcoholic tendencies, leniency should be shown in shortening or commuting their terms. According to Judge Gates no such solution was found until Alcoholics Anonymous, with its appreciable success in rehabilitating such cases. Judge Gates also stressed the value of A.A. to The community, the state and the nation.—*W.C.H.*

Half-A-Man

(Continued from Page 8)

ways, he felt that he could not afford the fare.

We often say that if we put half as much effort into staying sober as we did into staying "slopped up" we would be in fine shape. Well, not many of us would have put forth that much effort and time in running down a drink in the old days.

We have two meetings weekly, Monday nights closed, and on Thursdays we welcome members' families, doctors, judges, ministers and others who are genuinely interested in the group. On these occasions we have refreshments furnished by the wives of members. As yet, we do not have permanent clubrooms but hope to have something with kitchen facilities soon.

About once a month we have a big supper. We serve fish, or Brunswick stew or barbecue. These are really events, and make us all keenly aware of the FUN it is to be sober, and remind us all too poignantly of the parties and picnics we've missed in past years, or those which we attended without remembering or ended in spoiling for ourselves and everyone else. Man, if all the coffee and good talk we've soaked up since we started our group could be measured, it might even outweigh the hootch we consumed!

On July 1 we had a big open meeting in our high school auditorium. Four members from other A.A. groups in North Carolina and an A.A. from a South Carolina group conducted this for us. We of the local group took no public part, merely making preparations and then entering; and mixing with the crowd in the audience in a way that made us unnoticeable. Those five speakers conducted an inspired A.A. meeting and had the mouths of their audience agape with their honesty, sincerity and robust good humor. Some of the listeners may have come to scoff, but they surely remained to pray.

It still seems funny that many people harbor the idea that membership in A.A. is available only to alcoholics who have become complete derelicts and gutter bums. When those outside A.A. see the healthy, contented people who have achieved peace of mind in a new way of life it must make them squirm inside to recall that here are individuals whom they once considered hopeless and beyond all help. (And for J. B. of Muncie, Indiana: No, we don't like being called *alkies!*)

At present we are working on a plan whereby each member who can spare a few dollars will buy a book on alcoholism or some related subject and pool them into a nice little circulating library for the group. There is also a lot of interest in sending in confessions about our favorite places for hiding our liquor, as mentioned in the July issue of *The A.A. Grapevine*.

His Morbid Farewell Note Carried Seeds of New Life

From Newburgh, N. Y.

The mental barometer was at an all time low. The swirling vortex of the emotional storm of which I was the epicenter turned with increasing violence as the alcoholic rains lashed me relentlessly, yes, almost gleefully. I fought to get out of the storm. The thought waves, the encouragement of those outside the sphere of this monstrous cataclysm reached me vaguely but without substantial effect. I was powerless.

Suddenly the barometer commenced a slow rise but its upward advance was firm. The slashing rains and tornadic winds, which had bruised an almost inert body, lessened and the clouds, began to lift. Blue skies were studded with sun-flecked clouds, soothing breezes caressed me, and life returned to a body, thirsting for decent, self-respecting ways. Yes, I had come to A.A. after 22 years of fumbling along the byways, never being able to find that smooth road along which was all I had sought through the insidious companionship of alcohol.

Glad of Experience

I am glad I had that experience, strange as that may sound, for I might have lived just as hollowly, just as pointlessly, just as unhappily being a total abstainer or even a dubiously-titled social drinker. That I don't want to return to that false way of life *today* is emphatically true. That what has happened in the past I don't wish to entirely forget but I won't brood about it is true also. That I am the happiest today I have ever been (as long as I can remember) is written without a single reservation mentally. And I know I was forever saying "yes" or "no" with reservations so it seems incredible that I could mean it now. But I do.

I came into A.A. sober—yes after three months of forced sobriety which followed a binge I like to think of as my last. Those three months were almost as torturous as the periods when I reached a semi-state of sobriety during the drinking years. I was—in the actual use of the word—a first class stinker. My mind cleared slowly to a point where I could reason more normally, but the fact remained paramount—I was still concentrating on just me, what I thought was right and to hell with the rest of the world. Nervous? I was one big nerve, jumping at the slightest noise, even when it was a perfectly normal one.

Why did I stop drinking at a time when I wound up a 14-day bat during which I worked only three days? I can't tell you. Was I broke? Silly question! After all, that had never bothered me before, as alcoholics know. Was I afraid? Frankly I did get scared several times during

that binge, for I had seen that plastic foam oozing out from the baseboards and under the door, seen those awful eyes such as I had seen during a bout or two with the old DT's. But being in two state hospitals and in the hospital of the county's poor farm had been no deterrent previously.

To analyze the strange demise of alcoholic drinking in me I believe would be impossible and could cause a worriment that might be detrimental to my still neophyte way of reasoning. I say that because I think I will be a long time getting rid of the manifestations of the alcoholic mental quirks and I doubt seriously if I will ever be free of them. I believe subconsciously I was thinking of A.A. A friend of mine in New Jersey had written me, telling me of the Newburgh group. But I had been dilatory, having, naturally, the alcoholic ego that some day I would conquer this thing alone.

Having been a newspaperman for over 15 years (I lost the best job I ever had due to drinking), I had been aware many times of the obvious fact that so many persons were found dead without identification or the fundamental data on whom to notify in case of a sudden death. So in my pocket I have always carried a "To Whom It May Concern" note, with the necessary facts about me, and also a brief, though sometimes, somewhat morbid farewell to life. And the strange fact is that in the last one I wrote, May 4, 1946, after my last alcoholic tour of the Hudson Valley, I had penned: "You can say mine was a wasted life but it's not hard to explain my actions when you consider I was an A.A. (an active alcoholic, so designated to me in the first state hospital I was in) most of my life from high school on." There was the admission on the first page but I still didn't know what to do about it.

Motivated by Fear

On the third page (oh, this was a thought-out "goodbye," written when I still had the shakes) I wrote this: "I am convinced that only in death can there be any peace (how screwy that was in view of the resultant peace of mind I have attained since coming into Alcoholics Anonymous!), whether you go to Heaven or Hell, both places which I have always held in doubt. That there is a God, I am sure. (The seed of the A.A. idea was sprouting.) But I am sure we all find him in different ways.

"That He is seems more profound in the wonders of Nature, the birth of Life in the Spring, its recession in the Fall; the sunsets, the glorious inward exhilaration of standing under a star-studded sky when the snow lies deep and the frost in the air makes the

trees crack; the soft touch of a summer rain or the slashing sleet; the potency of thunder and lightning; the majesty of earth and sky in harmony, whether it be clear or stormy, for one reflects the mood of the other. Science explains it—but God wills it that way."

My attempts at prayer over a period of years were countless, futile and tenuous. My childhood reminiscences of the Power greater than myself, whom I call God, were like so many, fearful. For years I lived in fear of myself, in a sense, but more of life. I hid behind a bulkhead of alcohol against which the waves of real living beat relentlessly—and I was afraid. Now that bulkhead has been washed away—and not with drinking.

Life Has Purpose Today

By the grace of God—and I write that sincerely and humbly for I flirted with death too many times and nearly died in the hospital in 1943—I am alive today, disgustingly healthy for one who punished himself as I did, happy and working, all because of sobriety, aided and abetted by A.A. To that end I bend my efforts. For as radar sends out impulses, and returns a picture of an obstructive object, so when I help another to find sobriety and peace of mind, I in turn benefit myself.

Twenty-two years of drinking lie behind me, cluttered like an invasion beachhead with broken marriages, bankruptcy, pauperism, deceit, stealing, intolerance and the host of other vulturine incidents. That is yesterday—a foggy, painful experience. Today is here—and opportunity, which knocked so often and was ignored, may come again, this time to be received sanely and happily. Tomorrow—let's not be troubled with it today. I feel more confidence in being able to tackle the problems at hand instead of submerging, or better preserving, them in that first drink which leads down—down—down—and, for me, to an oblivion from which this time there will be no reprieve, whether it be mental or physical death.—E. E. T.

ANNUAL N. Y. DINNER TO BE HELD NOV. 6

Announcement has just been made that the annual dinner of Alcoholics Anonymous will be held in the Grand Ballroom of the Commodore Hotel in New York City at 7 p.m. Thursday evening, November 6th, under the auspices of the Intergroup Association of New York.

Tickets may be obtained from the Intergroup Office at 194 East 75th Street, New York 21, and are priced at \$5.50 each.

STEPPING STONES TO SOBRIETY

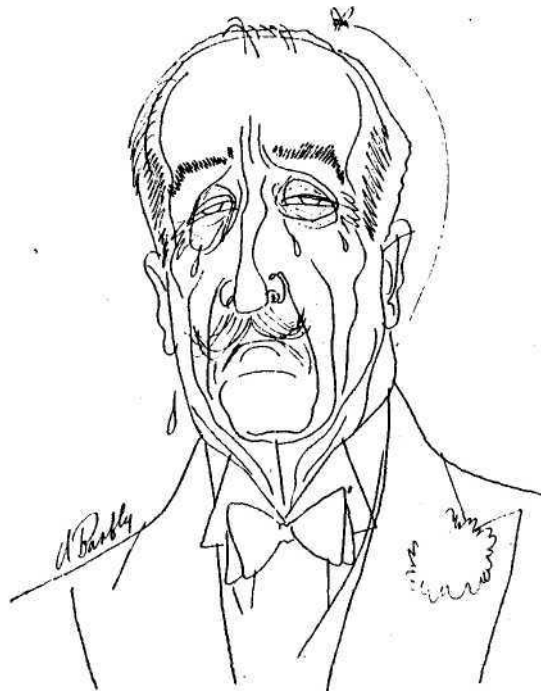
From New York City

Religion took a back seat with me for many years. I was neither an agnostic nor an atheist though I had definite resentments against my own church. Most of them puerile, I realize now, but I clung to them and rationalized that I had had too much religion in my childhood. Perhaps sometime in the far distant future I might again turn to God, I would muse, but now I was not ready for or inclined towards any sort of organized religion. I believed myself to be a good Christian in the broad sense of the word and took Shakespeare's "to thine own self be true" philosophy as mine. Here again I was rationalizing because now I know I was not true to even myself. I blamed circumstances and people for my misfortunes and felt that hard luck was my fate. My motto was "God helps those who help themselves" so instead of turning to Him I turned from Him and became a self-willed, determined individual intent on taking happiness where I found it.

My search for happiness was never realized for I never knew quite what I wanted from life. I was dissatisfied with my lot, bored, bitter and resentful and tried to cover up my frustrations by pretending to be the Pollyanna. I made a feeble attempt to return to religion but without a sincere desire to get to the root of my trouble and organize my life. I rather enjoyed my ruts and didn't do much about getting out of them. I had to have my excuses to drink and by playing the role of a martyr I found sufficient reasons for drowning my sorrows periodically.

Patience Helps

I joined A.A. about the same time I tuned in on a spiritual program on the radio. The two seemed synonymous to me and I took a genuine interest in the daily inspirational talks. I believe whatever spiritual progress I have made has come from my delving into metaphysics. I have only touched the surface in the past year and a half but am convinced I have been helped. I have turned to God and discuss with Him anything that bothers me. I have learned to wait, "to let go and let God" instead of rushing ahead without thought of consequence. I have always been impetuous, and have had to do much disciplining on this score. I have learned to accept my temperament and to strive to improve those character defects I recognized as potential hurdles. I have as many low moods as before I stopped drinking but they don't last as long because I am fortified and recognize them for what they are and know that in time they shall pass.



"Sanitariums? Yes, I've been in scores of them. A.A.? I couldn't afford to be seen there."

Gaining an insight to the spiritual part of the program has helped me tackle problems by getting to work on myself and not blaming circumstances or people. I am comforted by the realization that I am not alone no matter what happens. I know that I shall be shown the way if I do my very best each day and sincerely try to improve. Without the spiritual approach I doubt that I would have had the desire or initiative to stay sober. With it I have seen how futile and empty my life was and how complete and full it can be. Problems are not so much to be dreaded as expected. How I rise above them is the important part. Gaining an insight to the spiritual angle has also made me realize I must know myself before I can sufficiently help my fellowman.

Faith, belief and practice have taken the place of analyzing and not utilizing with me, resulting in a new set of values and principles. I am not implying that because I have recognized my need of a spiritual approach and am doing my best to lead a better life that all is serene. Rather it means that I now know that all of life has its ups and downs. We must all face it in our own way with a will and determination to do our best with the help of God. It is only by facing difficulties that we strengthen our minds and our mistakes of yesterday can be stepping stones for tomorrow if we do something about them today.

—Mildred O.

* * *
**ONE IS TOO MANY,
40 NOT ENOUGH**

For Group Discussions

Beginning with the October issue, *The A.A. Grapevine* will initiate a new, regular monthly feature—the group meeting page.

The purpose of the new feature will be to present a number of topics which have been found to be stimulating subjects for group discussion. The new feature is being established in response to requests from a number of the smaller groups where the personal experiences of the members are soon exhausted and new topics are needed.

The new department also will describe the various types of meetings to be found among the many groups throughout the country.

Bottoms Up!

(Continued from Page 6)

called in a very religious neighbor—an elderly lady—to pray for him. When the neighbor arrived, she took one look at the drunk and cried, "Oh, Lord, help this drunken man!" The drunk stopped muttering and, gazing up at her in bewilderment, said, "Hell, lady, don't tell Him I'm drunk, tell Him I'm sick!"

* * *

In Washington, they're telling of a conversation between two new A.A. members. Both members are men; both had been running all over town and staying up half the night doing 12th Step work. After a particularly trying night, the boys stopped for a bit of rest and coffee at an all-night restaurant. When they had been seated, one asked the other: "Tom, what were you doing a year ago?" Tom wiped the perspiration from his brow, considered a moment and said, "A year ago I was seated in a nice, air conditioned bar, drinking a Tom Collins and *mind my own damn business!*"

* * *

Anyone who has had much experience handling drunks should also be good with children. They have to be treated much alike. In fact, come to think of it, they are alike—ain't we, kids?

* * *

A member of a Little Rock, Ark., Group won the City Golf Championship twice several years ago. Since then, however, he almost bit bottom—broken home, children in orphanage and all the rest of the old, old story. Then he found A.A. and sobriety. Recently he came to the secretary and said, "I feel that this trophy should be here in the clubhouse. Without A.A. I certainly wouldn't have had it." Last July, he won the trophy for the third time, giving him and A.A. permanent possession.

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 A.A. 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

One Man's Influence

From Tuscaloosa, Ala.

The Tuscaloosa Group has witnessed a remarkable transformation of one of its members who literally overnight grasped the 3rd A.A. Step and the meaning of the spiritual side of the program.

For many months B.W. was slipping and sliding this way and that in A.A. One could tell he was groping, trying to find the answer. He missed many meetings, he sought the bottle many times. He had not fully accepted the A.A. way of life.

A domestic crisis brought B.W. to the fork of the roads. He had to choose, not for someone else, but for himself, he was helped by a minister who knows and understands A.A. principles.

This minister likes to consider himself an honorary member in Tuscaloosa. He attends all the open meetings he possibly can, and he uses A.A. in his church work. It was to this minister that B.W. went with his problem.

The change was startling, almost miraculous. One had only to look at B.W.: his face and expression were different, and his voice carried a quiet assurance.

Perhaps the experience of B.W. has had something to do with the change in the tone of the meetings in Tuscaloosa. It seems that a more sincere and deep frankness prevails, that members are beginning to speak up and get things off their chests, and interest in the spiritual side is grasping those present.

The group in Tuscaloosa, with a membership of 64, will observe its first anniversary in September. An open meeting in the spring, conducted by C.W. and M.L. of the Birmingham Group, contributed to public understanding in Tuscaloosa. It was following this meeting that the group received the first of its five women members.

It was at this time, too, that O.E., working out a fine for the police department, had the fine remitted because he was proving to be a good A.A., and went to work for pay with the same police department. He took a job as driver of the city water wagon.—H.Y.

First Things First!

from Jackson, Miss.

My experience has taught me that, above all others, the 1st Step is of the utmost importance. And because of the stubbornness which seems to be a natural part of alcoholic thinking, I think this Step is probably the most difficult of all to take. It is easy to say we take it, but to actually and permanently know that we cannot handle that first drink is indeed difficult. I know because I have had several so-called "slips" and I know from those experiences that the real difficulty was that deep within my thinking I still had not admitted that I could not handle alcohol. It has been many months since my last slip and I am earnestly praying that at last I am fully convinced.—M.T.W.

Why Name Names?

From Manhattan

Regarding J.R.'s "Let Stay Anonymous," from Clinton, Okla., I would like to say that I have never been able to understand the customary practice at A.A. meetings, especially open ones, of the use of full names by the leaders and speakers. It does not seem to make sense.—R.R.

Publicity Seekers

From Detroit, Mich.

Notwithstanding Bill's article on anonymity, which seemed to me to state the voice of experience pretty well on this crucial subject, there still seem to be a number of A.A.s who don't understand the reasons for anonymity.

My work calls for me to read newspapers from all over the country, and many magazines. At first I was astonished when I would come on an article revealing the identity of some A.A., with his or her obvious assistance. I no longer am astonished; there have been too many cases, but I can't help worrying about it.

The reasons for anonymity seem plain to me. The promise of anonymity is certainly reassurance for the new prospect. Many would not come to A.A. if they thought it was going to be made public. When they see the names of A.A.s splashed all around they naturally doubt that we really mean we are anonymous, or that they can be anonymous if they wish.

Anonymity prevents—or it would prevent—personal publicity exploits, those cases where an individual member cashes in personally by publicizing the fact that he or she is a member. In my opinion, this is pretty cheap stuff and

certainly contrary to the spirit of A.A. For anyone to whom publicity is commercially valuable to use A.A. to get such publicity is scarcely in keeping with the A.A. concept of giving to others. This is plain, unvarnished seeking for personal gain.

Finally, what happens when one of these spotlight seekers falls flat on his or her face in full public view—what is the effect on A.A. then? Not good, certainly.

No one has any authority to set himself or herself up in public as being representative of A.A. in any respect. I don't want to be represented by these publicity seekers, and neither do a lot of other A.A.s.

But, most important of all, the anonymity part of A.A. is linked closely with the spiritual elements of the program—the humility, the giving without thought of return, the unselfish brotherhood, the non-commercialism and non-professionalism—or in short, anonymity is protection for the most important things, the priceless things, we have in A.A. Let's not let publicity seekers destroy them.—H.H.

Another Name

From Newark, N. J.

Well, I see by the July 10, 1947, issue of the *Newark Star-Ledger* that another member of A.A. seems to have dropped his anonymity and "rushed into print" to tell about some fine jail prisoner rehabilitation. I'm for helping jail prisoners all we can, but I'm not for dropping our anonymity or for any individual member giving out statements on behalf of A.A. Can't we really help more anonymously?—A.N.

Maintenance

From San Luis Obispo, Calif.

A man had a good car. The starter kicked off promptly, the timing was good, and everything ran smoothly. The owner appreciated the convenience of this well adjusted machine, but he came to take it too much for granted.

Several thousands of miles rolled by. One morning the old buggy was not very responsive. The battery barely turned the engine over. The motor stuttered a lot. Squeaks and rattles added to the general discord. Steering was difficult.

The owner became aware of all these symptoms with shocked surprise. He nursed the car down to a service man whom he trusted. He ruefully admitted the many errors of omission in his treatment of the machine.

Things had not gone too far. The battery re-
(Continued on next page)

sponded to a slow charge. Oil was changed, the whole chassis greased and tightened, and adjustments made throughout.

The result was an adequate restoration of the functions of the car. With the bill for material and services, the owner meekly accepted some pertinent advice on the proper steps necessary to the upkeep of his vehicle. The mind of the owner was receptive to these suggestions because his means of getting around had been threatened with complete failure.

How many A.A. members have learned the steps needed for recovery, and then gradually dropped one step after another until they were doing little or no active thinking toward keeping themselves "in good working order"? Our program has a maintenance clause for our use. It is as clear as the booklet of instructions which our car owner got with his car. The 10th Step is particularly effective as a reminder. Let us learn it well, and know that we have to make routine inspections of ourselves in order to keep "running smoothly."

A good goal in this part of our work would be to apply continuing self-knowledge until it becomes habit. While such an aim is worthwhile with any Step, emphasis on the 10th Step would seem to be good insurance for good living.

—Ed.

The First Step

From San Diego, Calif.

Any structure we erect in life, whether it be a material or a moral structure, must have a solid foundation on which to rest or it will crumble and disintegrate.

The 1st Step in the A.A. program of life is that kind of foundation. A complete understanding of it is necessary before we can hope to be able to know how to use the other materials furnished by the balance of the program with which to erect the kind of structure that we wish to dwell in for the rest of our lives.

The disease of alcoholism has for its foundation two parts, a physical and mental combination that makes it hard to tear down and replace. When we start, we should realize this and not try to do the job all at one time.

The 1st Step points this out very clearly—*"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol"* (Part One, physical), *"and that our lives were unmanageable"* (Part Two, mental). Let us then start to rebuild the basic part of our foundation, the physical part of our structure. How are we powerless over alcohol?

We are powerless over alcohol as long as we use our physical powers to lift a glass of liquor to our mouths and drink. We are powerless over alcohol as long as we use it as a beverage.

We know, because we have proven it, that as long as we don't drink, we stay dried out and

can take care of the material side of our existence. We have as a class been pretty successful in taking care of ourselves and our families in material ways even while drunk both physically and mentally.

The simple act of not drinking will destroy the old physical disease and give us a new solid footing for the second part of our foundation.

When we have dried ourselves out physically and have a good footing, we are ready to start on the foundation, the old mental or spiritual part of our structure that we wish to replace. We start to do this when we admit that our lives are unmanageable. Actually the part of us that has become unmanageable is our spiritual or mental life. And why is this? The answer is very simple. When God created us, He made us in two parts, our bodies and our minds. He intended us to use our mental powers to keep in touch with Him, because He is the only one who can and does know the purpose for which we were created.

When we, in our egotism, tried to take over the management of our spiritual life, we ran into trouble. How can you direct or guide something that you know nothing about? Try driving a car without a steering wheel or a boat without a rudder. If you do this you will have a fair idea of what happened to you when you took over the job of running your spiritual life without the spiritual guidance of your Creator.

So, to complete your foundation give your spiritual life back to God. Let Him take over the wheel. He is the only one who knows where you are going, and He is the only one who can get you there safely.

Now, you are ready to take up the balance of the program—the other 11 Steps which show you how to turn your life over to God.—J.F.H.

Editorial

(Continued from Page 2)

a force which many A.A.s are reluctant to give up. Nor need they give it up. Will power is the motive force which is fueled by prayer and meditation. The Step expresses this idea clearly—"praying only for the knowledge of His will and the power to carry that out."

We must not be afraid to ask generously—pray fulsomely—for what we need. We shall be answered generously. It is not the amount of our demands on God that matters, but the love and sincerity and good will behind them.

Try it and see.—C.B., *Greenwich Village, New York City.*

None So Blind

(Continued from Page 1)

first drunk, "This is purty terrible, you know it?"

"Sure is," said the second drunk, not bothering to find out what was pretty terrible.

"Yes sir, it sure is! It's purty terrible!"

"Oh, how right you are!"

"Well, wait a minnit—I haven't told you yet! It's purty terrible that I should be here getting fried at this hour and the little woman sitting at home crying her heart out over a nice hot supper that she hadda throw out. You wanna know something? I am a louse!"

"You sure are!"

"Whawuz that last crack?"

"I said, I sure was."

"Tha's what I thought you said. You know what I'm a good mind to do?"

"Go home?"

"Oh no, I couldn't do that now. She'd only throw me out again. I am a good mind to walk right out of here and go join the Alcoholics Anonymous!"

The second drunk looked horror stricken. "My God, man, you can't mean that—please say you don't mean it! Why do you know what those lousy so-and-so's DO to you?"

The first drunk shook his head with the slow precision of the very intoxicated—as though it might come off if he were not careful.

"First Alcoholics Anonymous makes you promise never to take another drink so-help-you as long as you live. And then... and THEN if you break your promise they gang up on you and beat the living daylights outta you!"

"Is that a fact?" said the first drunk in dismay.

"S'trutb, so help me!" said the second drunk, "And I got proof! I know a guy who joined and he'll tell you himself that he's off liquor for life because on account of the terrific beating he took from it."

That story was passed along to me by a member from Glendale, California.

Then there was the one about the man and his wife who had called A.A. to send someone out who could help them both. The lady who answered the call was a delightful person with a winning personality but it just happened that she was on her way to a hiking trip in the mountains. She answered the call attired for the hike in knee-length heavy sox, short skirt, Tyrolean hat and a walking staff. When the husband opened the door to her he almost slammed it shut again because his first impression was that this must be the costume worn by A.A.s and that he himself would have to dress in a like manner.

The initial step to cure is twice as tough for an alcoholic if he doesn't know what to expect from us. He may want us, but is afraid of what we will give him. A young wife (non-alcoholic) told me

that she got her husband as far as the building where A.A. held its meeting, but unfortunately a church group had gathered in another section of the same building. They were admirable people, no doubt, but it was hardly the place for a man who had just put a few under his belt for courage to join A.A.

"This can't be the right place," said the wife, hanging tenaciously to her husband's coattails.

"Sure, it's the right place!" he answered, heading in the other direction, "Look at 'em—all prayin'. That's all they do—getcha in there and pray over you. Right now I ain't in the mood to be prayed over."

Still clinging to her husband's coat, the wife tried the door at another entrance to the building. That night marked her husband's last drink!

Another woman, a God-fearing, well meaning soul, almost upset the apple-cart by what she didn't know about Alcoholics Anonymous. To a woman friend she had recommended A.A. as an organization that would guarantee a cure for the husband. She pictured the A.A. sponsor as a sort of watch dog who stood guard day and night to keep the wayward husband out of bars. She insisted that the A.A. member would eat and sleep with him until a cure was affected.

"Well, I don't know—" said the wife doubtfully, "We just have a small place—how long would it take?"

"Sometimes a week, sometimes years," said our authoritative little press agent, "but isn't that better than being married to a drunkard?"

If that were the case it would open an interesting line of conjecture about the sponsor's own family. It might be tough having him away from home for a couple of years, but if a wife figured *anything for the cause*, it might go like this:

Wife: "Hello dear, where have you been since 1944?"

A.A. Member: Sponsoring an A.A. baby. It was a tough fight, but I'm home now."

Then again it might be a good solution to the housing problem!

Of course we always have with us the wife with a martyr complex. She doesn't know it but she doesn't want her husband cured. I have in mind a particular wife who thoroughly enjoys her husband's bondage to Barleycorn because it not only gives her something to wail about but also gives her the upper hand in the home. When I put all of the facts of A.A. before her, clearly and concisely, she threw up her hands in rejection: "Heavens, no! If he quits drinking, I'll *never* get rid of him because it's his only weakness."

Truly there is much to be said for the old adage, "None so blind as those who will not see."—
Idabel O.

* * *

EASY DOES IT

A.A. Holds Key to Powers

(The author of the following died as the result of a traffic accident on his way home from a meeting at which this talk was given.—Ed.)

From Chicago

I hadn't been on the program very long before very gradually the idea begun to sink in to the recesses of my mind that self betterment was one of the basic pillars on which our program is based, and is indeed a primary essential if we wish continued sobriety. What I wanted on the program was sobriety and I could look the other members of the group in the eye and tell them that all my troubles could be summed up in one word—booze. Actually, however, there were many defects in my personality and character and I didn't realize how many until I had been on the program for a considerable period.

According to many psychologists and psychiatrists, most alcoholics take to drink as a means of escape. However, by a rigid application of the 12 Steps it is possible for us to lead lives in which the need for escape is eliminated and in effecting this miracle we act as our own psychiatrists.

If it will make this idea more clear, it is my experience that a psychiatrist tries to locate some frustration or troublesome matter in a person's background, then brings it out in the open for the patient to recognize and handle in a normal fashion instead of trying to run away from it. Using the 12 Steps as our tools, we A.A. members gradually eliminate these things in our own way and create for ourselves a way of life in which we are happily dry.

This is, of course, closely related to our 8th and 10th Steps wherein we "made a list of persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all" and wherein we "continued to take personal inventory and when wrong promptly admitted it." Since we are to be alcoholics all of our lives and must be everlastingly on guard, we have in reality assumed a lifetime job. Our quiet time is closely inter-related with the application of these two particular Steps and their importance in planning our sobriety and new way of life cannot be overlooked. Most of us plan our work after a fashion once we get to the office. If a motor trip or a vacation is in view many pleasurable moments are attained in planning each particular leg of the journey, maps are brought out and equipment is renovated and cleaned. Some of us, particularly when going hunting or fishing, even plan for unforeseen contingencies and alternative routes. This is a technique which I believe fits very well into our A.A. quiet times. Let us during this period practice providing for unforeseen contingencies and alternative routes in our daily

A.A. way of life. There is much pleasure that can be obtained from this procedure and it will reinsure our final objective of continued sobriety.

The word "power" comes into our A.A. talk and literature with regularity. There is the "Power greater than ourselves" referred to in our 2nd Step. There is also the power of the group and we often think of the power of the grip John Barleycorn had over us as individuals. A power that we hear of all too little and the importance of which oftentimes escapes our attention is the power of example. We seldom realize or comprehend the power of our own individual examples on other members of our group. Do you think that if the founders and earlier members of the group had practiced erratic behavior with continuous slips that our organization would have grown to a membership of 40,000 to 45,000 within a period of twelve years, or that if E.T., C.L. or L.H.'s handling of their application of the A.A. program had been less consistent that our Chicago Group would have enjoyed its phenomenal growth and success? Most of us would be surprised and pleased if we realized the importance of the power of our example in our own groups—it is a power we should jealously guard and treasure.

The transition between power of example and slips is not difficult. They are closely related as the chronic slipper has a negative effect on the group as a whole. For lack of better name we call the following a slip. As the case may be, this person gets into his car or takes the elevator down from his office and makes for the saloon of his choice. He opens the door, goes in, and deposits himself within arm reach of the bar. When the bartender says, "What will you have?" he lays his money on the bar and replies in a distinct voice, "Bourbon and soda." The bartender puts a shot glass down, gets the soda and reaches to the back bar for the bourbon which in good time is poured and in turn gulped down. This describes what, with some minor variations, is called a slip. To most other people, however, it would appear simply that here is a fellow who wanted a drink and stepped out and got it. Perhaps slips aren't slips at all but wilful deviations from the program—shall we say *vacations* from A.A.? Our program has never failed—but there have been many misapplications, on the part of aspiring A.A.s, of the program to their daily lives.

Progress in my personal transition from lying, cheating and general dishonesty was effected because there seems to be a line of demarcation which my conscience readily recognized between truth and lies and honesty and cheating. However, the gradual change from arrogance and

(Continued on Page 16)

A.A. UTILIZES FACTORS INHERENT IN THE ALCOHOLIC PERSONALITY

(Continued from Page 7)

the comforting feature of the matter is that they can be done a little at a time. And the saving grace of the situation is that this is exactly what the 12 Steps are designed to accomplish.

Another liability encumbering the candidate is a general lack of faith. Faith in one's fellows is quickly restored by contact with A.A. members. Faith in a Higher Power is often not so quickly revived. It is a great handicap for an alcoholic to lose, as many do, his spiritual anchorage. Having no aims, life being bereft of purpose and significance, the alcoholic feels no compelling reason to stop drinking. Having rejected divine aid, human assistance being insufficient, he feels it hopeless even to attempt a recovery. This, undoubtedly, is the greatest handicap of all, but we know that the suggestion, during the course of the Program, of a Power greater than himself insidiously, almost surreptitiously, frees the man from frustration, fear, anxiety and resentment; brings about self-realization and discipline; and eventually there comes a free recognition of God and lavish self-helping of His bounty.

Turning to the asset side, there are at least three redemptive qualities which the Program turns to good account. The instinct of gregariousness is an outstanding attribute of most alcoholics. Actuated by this basic desire, the habit of seeking the association or company of others is formed and practised to an extent enlarged by the liquidation of any introversion that may

be inherent in the subject. The frequent and more or less systematic foregathering of the clan for the purpose of drinking, conversation, self-improvement and mutual admiration and criticism, is a phenomenon too common to require comment. Equally obvious is the same phenomenon observed in A.A. circles, as are also its therapeutic value when it occurs at the A.A. level.

Another property of the alcoholic (by no means restricted to him) is an inherent altruism. In the conflict between egoism and altruism, the impulse to help others often prevails. It is characteristic of the alcoholic and is reflected even during his drinking period. Herbert Spencer long ago observed that every generation of social living deepens the impulses to mutual aid. The altruization of the behavior of persons and groups is currently the subject of analysis and investigation with a view to bringing about harmony among groups, societies and nations. It has been said that each man can quicken the pace of moral evolution (*du Nouy supra*). None is more qualified to do so than the alcoholic by virtue of his possession of the quality of altruism. If he can find, as he does in A.A., a constructive outlet for the altruistic urge, he obtains his own release and may become a factor of uncommon significance in the evolutive transformation of mankind from physiological slavery to spiritual freedom.

Anything Is Possible

The last asset possessed by every alcoholic, no matter how depraved, to which reference will be made, is the element of divinity which is present in every man. Without this, little could be done; with it, nothing is impossible. A.A. in its empirical way has demonstrated that "there is that of God in every man." This and this alone makes no damage to the human personality irreparable. This and only this makes it possible to say that no alcoholic is beyond redemption. Upon this proposition depends the ultimate validity of every technique and procedure employed in the Program. Our hopes and our realization thereof rest on the premise and the promise that man is not merely an automaton reacting to a physiochemical determinism, but a person created in the image and likeness of God with whom he may become a communicant, whose power he may draw upon, by reason of his kinship, once the decision is made and some effort shown. This is the alcoholic's primary asset upon which no creditor can levy but which, under A.A. auspices, may be the subject of benign inflation.—*R.F.S.*

(To be concluded)

Loud, But Good

Every A.A. knows how miserable he has felt coming off a binge. There simply aren't words to describe the experience. However, at a hospital in New York which has a wing for alcoholics and in which A.A.s may sponsor prospects, there is a "recovery room" that the boys call Duffy's Tavern. Here, patients are admitted after the first horrible 48 hours. When the new prospect is escorted into Duffy's by a nurse he is greeted with loud cheers, guffaws and a round of truly remarkable kidding. The sad one can't help but laugh at himself, for here's a crowd of guys that understand him!

A.A. Holds Key

(Continued from Page 15)

conceit to tolerance and humility is a fine line not easily discernible and my program has been difficult and slow. As to those virtues of tolerance and humility, both you and I can hear the world crying for them; but as A.A.s and individuals, how many of us actually view them as vital ingredients for our personal success? And how difficult it was for me to realize that a tolerant altitude is no favor to be condescendingly granted to my wife and friends, but is vastly more beneficial to the person who adopts it, than to the person who is being tolerated. I, for one, must develop tolerance for others so that I can retain and tolerate *myself*.

A.A. asks an answer to but one question, "Are you ready?" The answer must be categorically yes or no. When the question is asked, our newcomer is at the fork of the road; to the left is continued alcoholic excesses and to the right the A.A. way of life with its attendant happiness and peace of mind. It requires no exercise of the will to answer this question. All that is required is an election freely made between two choices—and any alcoholic may be free. Don't be mistaken—this is not high-faluting philosophy—this is the record of A.A.

Since I was first introduced to A.A. many things have happened. The war has been brought to a successful conclusion. My personal war with alcohol has, at least, reached the armistice stage. Peace with all its ramifications has gained access to my life and home.

I have discovered I am not a "big shot" but only a small cog in a big wheel. I have learned that yesterday cannot be recalled and that tomorrow is an unknown quality and that today—this present 24-hour period—is the time to practice the principles of A.A.—*H.R., Chicago.*

* * *

FIRST THINGS FIRST

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