

From the September 1947 Grapevine

# Little Rock Plan Gives Prospects Close Attention

One of a 1947 series on group methods and techniques

Greater Little Rock AA 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 AA 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."

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 AA and because this group has kept accurate records and statistics, we can report that our success is better than the national average of 75 percent — or to put it another way, our "slip" record is lower than the 25 percent 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 the 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 Twelve 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 him a small diary and ask that each day thereafter for twenty-eight 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 person, there are other procedures. First of all, in addition to being required to adhere strictly to the assignments 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 AA, 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 newcomers, seeking the way out.

There is the "Slip Squad," where the member 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 who, like himself, have "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 actual AA business.

We spend much time in planning and executing the new member'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 prospects, having been told by the psychiatrists, "We can do nothing more for you, your best bet is AA. 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 attitude of all businessmen of this city.

G. H. B., Little Rock, Ark.