

January 1945

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

The first A.A. Seamen's group ever organized was formed in Manhattan, June, 1944. Six months later, in December, the Seamen took over the first A.A. clubhouse ever opened anywhere (over 41/2 years ago), at 3341/2 W. 24th St., New York, the clubhouse having been vacated by the New York A.A.s for larger quarters.

That sounds like quick easy going. Actually, the establishment of the A.A. Seamen's Club was preceded by many months of consistent work by A.A. and doctors along the Eastern seaboard. As hospitals became overcrowded, the War Shipping Administration and the United Seamen's Service opened 7 Rest Centers throughout the country, near the largest seaports, where for 3 weeks men of the Merchant Marine could recuperate from their nerve-racking trips at sea. In some of the Rest Centers, the doctors have taken particular interest in steering alcoholic seamen into the A.A. way of thinking. The A.A. Seamen's Club does not confine itself to the Merchant Marine but hopes to include the Navy and Coast Guard as well - all types of seamen.

Already the A.A. Seamen are looking toward the day when they'll have groups in San Pedro, San Francisco, Baltimore - in all the ports of the United States and, eventually, in all the ports in the world. One of the dried-up seamen among those making calls on the alcoholics in the seamen's hospital at Staten Island and Ellis Island is a man who, until a few months ago, hadn't bought himself a suit of clothes in 20 years. John W., always penniless after the binge that invariably followed his reaching shore, got his clothes from charitable institutions. The other day John, who was accustomed to getting "a flop at the doghouse at 60c a week," for the first time in 20 years bought himself a new suit, new shoes, new overcoat - and put up at a big New York hotel at 6.50 a day. And he had one swell time. Sober. While formerly Drink was the only international language known to seamen when they got off their ships, an ever increasing number are learning the constructive language of the A.A. Seamen.

Treasurer of the Club is the non-alcoholic Vice-President of the Bank of New York, James Carey. Seaman Joe F. is Secretary, and among those on the Policy Committee are Horace C., an A.A. of six years standing and his non-alcoholic lawyer brother, Alfred.

(The *Grapevine* extends best wishes for 1945 to the new Seamen's Club.)