

February 1951



During 1950, 72,958 pieces of first class mail were sent out from your Headquarters. The large part of this was individual correspondence done by the secretaries. If you wrote last month... or last year with a problem or just to say hello, your letter and its answer is filed here and kept in its proper place by two file clerics.



Off by itself in a tiny room is the bookkeeping department. Here two major funds are accounted for to the last penny. (1) Income from The Big Book and all literature and (2) Group contributions. The sale of the Big Book is handled through Works Publishing and every one of your Group contributions are recorded on the books of the Alcoholic Foundation.



Surrounded by books, pamphlets, boxes and the tools of their trade, these boys in your shipping room sorted, wrapped and mailed, 12,544 packages of books and literature during 1950. Included in these packages were 23,920 copies of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous.

Survival of the Fittest. . .

24 HOUR CLUB

--upstairs the drink is coffee or coke--



THE sign outside says 'BAR' in big red neon letters. As you step inside from 26th street you get a nostalgic whiff of stale lager and old bar rags. Steady on! Eyes front! Past the saloon door ... twelve steps, then turn right and up the narrow winding stairs and—you're in. The 24 Hour Club.

If you're visiting New York and arrive at an odd hour it might be well to clear up a possible misconception. The name, 24 Hour Club, does not mean the place is open 'round the clock. It stems from the Plan of the same name. One day at a time, brother... and if it happens to be a rocky one, drop in. You'll find the same sort of a gang you'd find downstairs in the gin mill. Only upstairs the drink is coffee, or coke, and the thinking is straight.

If it's a weekday afternoon when you arrive chances are the club will be quiet. But there'll be somebody around. So grab a cup of coffee and have a little conversation. After five, the big T shaped room begins to liven up good and by dinner time there's sure to be a buzz of yaddata-yaddata. The accents may be different but it's sure to be the same kind of conversation you had night before last, back home.

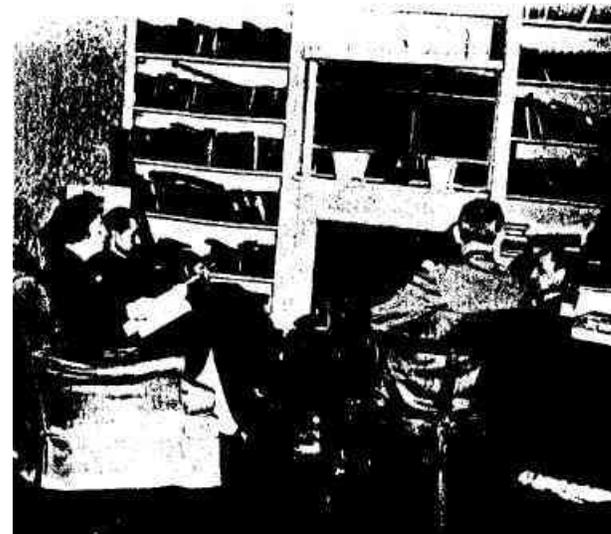
If it should be Saturday night when you show up, the joint is likely to be jumpin'. Crowded. For Saturday night is Saturday night, drunk or sober, in Middletown or Manhattan. Show night, with the

entertainment sometimes planned, sometimes spontaneous, but always fun.

Hear that tinkling piano over in the corner? Listen closer. Familiar? It might be. For 'the kid at the music box' might very well own the same name you've got on a stack of phonograph records at home. Or the voice at the microphone may have a familiar ring. A torch singer who rushed down after her night's performance in a Broadway smash hit; or a comic who ducked in to help out between his 10 PM and 2 AM stints at a plushy night club; or a concert artist; or a musician who'll pour out music with gratitude in every note.

The 24 Hour Club of a Saturday night is probably the truest distillation of the wacky cross-section that is AA in this wackiest of all cities. The famous, the near famous and ... no longer tragic ... the once famous. People whose paths never would have crossed in their drinking days. A Wall Street broker, a subway guard, a former world's boxing champion, names from the Social Register and names that aren't even in the phone book.

It's a membership club. Dues are three bucks a month. No drunks allowed. No 12th Step work. No official connection with AA at all. No meetings. No card playing. No gambling. And every 'no' has a reason for being, learned from the bitter experiences of the clubhouse rows when, as one fellow said,



the fireplace provides a quiet nook for good AA conversation,...

'New York AA damned near 'clubbed' itself to death.'

The 24 Hour Club was formed in 1946 after the hassle at the 41st street location. A handful of AAs who liked the idea of a club and and 'needed a place to go' quietly got together, put up a few dollars, and rented a drafty but spacious room over a filling station on down-at-the-heel First Avenue. They resurrected some sorry furniture, made coffee tables out of saw horses and plain boards and on New Years '47 opened the, and we used the word advisedly — *joint!* But *what* a joint! A success from the start because it eliminated the traditional mistakes of trying to combine AA 'therapy' with purely social activities; mixing the management of material property with the spiritual quality of AA's fundamental purpose.

The 24 Hour pioneers didn't pretend to be running anything but a hangout for guys and gals who liked each other's company. If you wanted your soul saved, go elsewhere. The no cards, no gambling ban was not the idea of goody-goodies but merely the practical observation of oldtimers who got sick and tired of the eternal and petty arguments over the moral aspects of trying to fill an inside straight on the same premises where soul searching was also in progress.

With a copy of the 12 Traditions in their fists and a quick look back over their shoulders at New York's unfortunate clubhouse history, the 24 Hour founders made the cleavage clear. And they've kept it that way ever since. And, we might add, they've prospered. The 24 Hour Club is *for* AAs, but it is not, officially *of* AA.