

July 1945

The Grapevine: Past, Present and Future

By Bill W.

The Grapevine has just completed the first year of its existence. Scores of enthusiastic letters are coming in. They are written from all over the United States and from some foreign countries. They congratulate *The Grapevine* staff and ask them to keep up their good work.

To these felicitations I'd like to add my own. A grand job has been done by the volunteer staff, who gave freely a vast amount of time and labour. And some of them gave money, too; you don't start a paper on hay. To the retiring volunteers, I want to say, along with every *Grapevine* subscriber, "Congratulations and thanks."

How did the *Grapevine* start, and where does it go from here?

Last summer several N.Y. A.A.s decided it was about time the groups in our metropolitan area had a monthly publication. At first there was some discussion about getting it suitably endorsed by the local groups, The Alcoholic Foundation, or somebody. But no one could endorse a magazine that hadn't yet appeared. The Grapeviners went ahead anyway on the theory that if their sheet was good enough it would take on; if it proved too corny or dull it would flop automatically - and quickly! People could, the Grapeviners said, "take it or leave it alone."

In a burst of local pride *The Grapevine* staff mailed the first printing to all the groups in the United States. No pressure or soliciting. They just mailed it. Subscriptions began to filter in from everywhere. No longer a trickle, they are today a stream. *The Grapevine* now has subscribers in every one of the 48 states and even abroad.

Foreseeing a broader activity, members of *The Grapevine* staff were good enough to ask me a few months ago if I would take an interest in the venture for the coming year. They told me they thought the magazine might be enlarged to national dimensions; that ultimately it should be incorporated, and finally, perhaps, hooked up with The Alcoholic Foundation, which, as nearly every A.A. knows, is the sponsor of our Central Office and all our national undertakings.

This conversation made it abundantly plain that while rotating squads of volunteers might always continue to procure and edit pieces for *The Grapevine* and participate in setting its policy, there could be no doubt that continuous paid help and enlarged working facilities would soon be necessary. They asked if I would help with these arrangements and perhaps contribute a piece occasionally. These things, health permitting, I agreed to do.

Besides the volunteer staff, we now boast one part-time paid secretarial worker to help handle details. This work, however, continues to mount, as does the volume of potential editorial content. More paid help will probably become necessary and the size of the magazine may have to be expanded, all of which would require a slight increase in the subscription rate. *The Grapevine* is self-supporting now and should be kept that way always, rather than be dependent on subsidies or gratuities, to insure its continuity, quality and service.

Though *The Grapevine* is young, it is commencing to have its own tradition. Every member of the staff aspires to make the paper a true voice of A.A. All of us are very sensitive to the thought that it ought never to be sectional in its appeal nor should it take sides on any controversial question. While it must constantly talk of people, in its news and views, it ought never to glorify or belittle anyone, nor lend itself to commercial undertaking, nor become a mere mouthpiece for any of us, even the Central Office or The Alcoholic Foundation. Of course, everybody will see pieces in *The Grapevine* now and then with which he will not agree. So it must always be understood that these pieces reflect the thoughts and feelings of their authors but not necessarily those of *The Grapevine*. To crystallize these

traditions and principles we ask for more contributions from all parts of the country.

Meanwhile please don't expect too much of us too quickly. We are still understaffed; we can't possibly answer all your letters and inquiries. I am afraid that will have to go for me, too. I shall be unable to engage in personal correspondence. I can only write a piece to all of you now and then.

If agreeable to the subscribers, I would like to discuss in coming issues such topics as anonymity, leadership, public relations, the use of money in A.A., and the like. Upon matters such as these, our tradition and practice is by no means well settled. Like most older A.A.s I have come to place great reliance on the ability of our groups to work out correct principles, once given sufficient experience. The purpose, therefore, of the forthcoming pieces will be to present the current thought, the pros and cons, on these moot questions. These articles will be suggestive only. Their object will be to promote further discussion rather than to announce any new principle.

We of *The Grapevine* once more affirm that this is your periodical. It will be the vehicle for your thoughts, your feelings, your experiences, and your aspirations - if you care to make it that. While we can only publish a fraction of the material which will come to hand you may be sure that we shall do our fairest and best in making the selections. Always wishing to reflect A.A., and nothing but A.A., it will be the ideal of *The Grapevine* always to serve, never to dictate or command. Please help us make it a true voice.