

June 1964



The Grapevine Starts Its Twenty-First Year

ONE piece of AA literature which always keeps growing—your AA Grapevine—begins its twenty-first year this month. And frankly, the present staff and volunteer crew feel very nostalgic and a bit awed.

Lots of the biggest news in AA—and, in fact, in the whole world of alcoholism—has developed right here in these pages. You can see the highlights in such phrases as— "six ink-stained wretches." That's what Bill W. called the members who started it down in Greenwich Village, bringing out Vol. I, No. 1 in June, 1944. It was

an 8-page newspaper then, costing 15 cents a copy, and the six Grapevine founders did all the work as volunteers, making up the deficits for many, many months. According to "AA Comes of Age," the six were Marty, Priscilla, Abbot, Lois K., Maeve and Kay. Today's crew can only say it's an honor to try to follow in their historic footsteps.

A *MEETING IN PRINT*. Certainly not much of the world noted our first issue, because the month it appeared was the month of D-Day in Normandy. In fact, one of the original reasons for starting the

Grapevine was to keep AA members in the armed forces in touch. They rapidly dubbed it their "meeting in print," and every AA known to be in the services was sent the Grapevine free until World War II was over.

N.C.A. The very first announcement of the establishment of a national *health* organization on alcoholism was made on these pages in our first year. It was an historic step toward removing the stigma from our illness. Ever since then we have proudly noted the uphill victories of the National Council on Alcoholism which, although never connected with AA, has stayed in our corner in the battle against the disease of alcoholism, doing public education, research, lobbying and other important jobs AA cannot do.

AL-ANON AND ALATEEN. We'd like to claim that both the Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen sort of started here. In our seventh issue the front page carried Lois W.'s story, in which she told of learning to live by AA principles for herself, not just for her alcoholic husband Bill. That issue also carried many wonderful letters from the teen-age children of AA members telling how AA had changed their lives. From then on the Grapevine carried such pieces until the Al-Anon Family Group headquarters was organized and had developed their own publications. They

now do a much better job than we can of healing some of the most injurious wounds inflicted by our alcoholism: those on our families and other loved ones.

JELLINEK'S "PHASES." In April, 1945, the Grapevine broke new ground. We published a questionnaire designed by the late beloved and distinguished Dr. E. M. (Bunky) Jellinek, then head of the Yale (now Rutgers) Center of Alcohol Studies, and asked AA members to make a contribution to science by mailing in the questionnaire anonymously. Hundreds did, and this is the origin of Dr. Jellinek's famous chart, "Phases of Alcohol Addiction," later distributed throughout the world and generally conceded to be one of the most important pieces of research ever done in the whole field of alcoholism.

GOING NATIONAL. The old "Foundation," now our General Service Board, polled the 600 groups registered in the fall of 1945, and as a result, with the December issue of that year the Grapevine became the *national* AA monthly magazine. (And the Trustees discovered they had to pick up the tab several times when we couldn't pay the printer!)

ENCYCLOPEDIA B., yet. We felt pretty great as 1946 began. Our price went to 25¢ a copy, and a famous Encyclopedia asked for per-

mission to list us as a reference! Our pink cloud didn't last, though. In the E. B., one paragraph under "Temperance" is devoted to AA. And then...

THE F.B.I. That's right. One morning two (identification) card-carrying Federal Bureau of I. agents were waiting at the door. Their house organ, it seemed, was named *Grapevine*. What were we going to do about it?

Our April, 1946, issue showed what we did about it; we just added initials, and became the AA Grapevine. Everybody was happy. (We later learned a grape-juice bottling company and a famous Hollywood cemetery also published house organs named *Grapevine*. Never heard from them. They probably never heard of us.)

That was also the first time somebody realized we ought to be copy-

righted, and so that issue carries our first © printed crookedly in the margin, as an afterthought.

MODESTY IN PUBLIC RELATIONS. That headline on a piece by Bill in the August, 1945, issue was the first hint ever printed that AA might need more principles than the old-timers' first legacy to us, the Suggested Twelve Steps for recovery. A series of such pieces about AA's experiences was climaxed with "Twelve Points to Assure Our Future" by Bill in the April, 1946, issue.

Discussion about them ran hot and heavy in these pages—for more than four years. Should we drop anonymity? Should we accept fortunes left us in wills? What should we do about clubhouses? Membership rules? Bleeding hearts? Bleeding deacons—and all the rest. Finally, in their present form, the

Twelve Traditions were accepted at the Cleveland, 1950, Convention, as our second legacy, that of Unity.

THE PREAMBLE. Meanwhile, back in the small print at the old masthead, something else had originated here. By then the Grapevine was circulating more and more among nonalcoholics, many of whom did not know anything about AA. Mostly for them, in order to make clear what we are and aren't, in the June, 1947, Grapevine there appeared for the first time those lovely words, "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope. . . ." For this whole story, dig up your November, 1963, copy.

DIGEST SIZE. We took our present size and shape with the September, 1948, issue—again in response to

a poll of the membership. In those days that was the only way we could get at the group conscience of AA as a whole.

THE THIRD GIFT. In 1950, Bill and Dr. Bob issued in these pages a call for their successors. (The same issue carried a late news flash: the sad tidings of Dr. Bob's passing from us.) The AA membership as a whole, the co-founders suggested, should somehow take over the movement-wide service jobs which the older members had ungrudgingly performed for so long. And so that year the General Service Conference came into being, and AA members came into their third legacy, that of Service, perhaps the biggest responsibility of all, the one we are all painfully trying to learn to shoulder.

OUR FIRST BOOK. At the inter-

national AA convention in Long Beach, Calif., in 1960, we unveiled the first Grapevine book, "AA Today," a large album-sized volume with a wealth of original pictures and articles by AAs and by some of our most noted nonalcoholic friends.

BLOWING OUT THE CANDLES. Being twenty-one is fun, of course, because you hope so many growing pains are behind you. But it's scary, too, because you then realize for sure that maturity isn't a matter of age. We think the Grapevine has scarcely begun to grow.

If we are proud of having been an open forum of current AA thought and opinion in many important matters, we are not so proud of the follies of our past. If we are pleased that our circulation is now over 42,000, worldwide, we are not so happy that that is such a small drop in the AA desert.

Our Corporate Board now consists of seven AA members and one dearly beloved nonalcoholic friend we call Austin, a long-time member of our General Service Board. (He came through for the umpteenth time a few months ago when the Post Office suddenly clamped down, said we absolutely had to publish some *full* name as "publisher" each year. Bless the distinguished Austin T. MacCormick for letting us use his!)

Over the years our nonalcoholic friends have given us many, many

priceless articles, free. We started to make a list of all these contributors, but the list got so long—a *Who's Who*—we gave up the idea of printing it here and say instead to all, thank you!

Our AA writers and artists, not one of whom has ever been paid a penny for Grapevine contributions, include some of the nation's highest paid professionals. The bulk of our best pieces, however, arrive through the mail, unsolicited, from the membership.

Who sets our editorial policy? You, of course, with your letters and the material you send in. An Advisory Editorial Board of eighteen members meets monthly to "guide" (we talk, that's how; what else would you expect in AA?) the present staff of one volunteer editor, two full-time and one part-time editorial staff members, and one part-time art director, all AA members. A paid nonalcoholic crew of six handles the business operations—subscription, mailing and so on, with a patience, accuracy and dedication rarely found anywhere.

"...*IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS.*" A few years ago with Bill's full-time help we took a long look at the place of the Grapevine in AA, and decided we ought to be more than just an AA meeting in print. We try now to take a bigger look at life in the world around us—outside AA meeting halls as well as within them.

That's why we have our present motto, on Page 1. And in each issue we try to share with you at least seven kinds of good nourishment: 1) personal stories, 2) new spiritual insights, 3) humor, 4) new factual, scientific, and philosophical knowledge, 5) new ideas about working the program, 6) AA around the world, and 7) reminders of fundamentals.

COME TO THE PARTY. We intend to celebrate this twenty-first year by reprinting a dozen articles from our earlier days, one each month. They're chosen carefully,

not because of any quaint historical interest but because they seem just as distinguished, just as excellent now as they were then. The first one appears in this issue on Page 2.

If you want to help us celebrate, please do. You might try to work up that article you've been thinking about and share it with all of us.

As we've always printed, "The AA Grapevine presents the experiences and opinions of AAs and others . . . opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to AA as a whole. . . ." *In our opinion*, the Grapevine is a good experience to share.

B. L., Greenwich Village, N. Y.