

May 1951



YOU journey to the *First International Conference* at Cleveland, to hear the Traditions confirmed. You do not *hear* the Traditions confirmed. Six fine looking men, from varying walks of life, with varying ages of sobriety — interpreted. Bill summarized: The Traditions are lessons gained in experience, written physically by his hand, actually by the Group Conscience; he thanked God that he had never been allowed to assume a mantle of leadership or authority. Then you found that you had risen to your feet with every other person there, and were adding your little bit, to the thunderous and steady applause. No — you did not hear the Traditions confirmed. You *felt* them confirmed.

A hot Sunday afternoon. A large

auditorium. The closing meeting of the conference. You have heard that Dr. Bob is gravely ill. He had not appeared at any of the sessions. Would he be able to make it this day? Four men come on the stage. Two of them you know by sight. The third is Bill, and the happiness on his face tells you who the fourth is, and that Dr. Bob has "made it." As these two men face each other on a public platform, maybe for the last time, you are again part of a standing ovation, which lasts many minutes, and which is laden with gratitude. You were thinking, "Where would I be today, if they had never met?" Dr. Bob's beautiful message, given in a clear strong voice, you will remember until the end of time. Then Bill started to speak. With a

rueful smile, he laid low the ogre, that AA had become Big Business. You sensed his great relief that "Smitty" had made the meeting that day. He told you too how AA had started in Norway.

So there you had it. The Group in the Leper Colony, the man from the Marshall Islands, the members from South Africa, the story of Norway, the story of Ireland — several groups in England - some in Scotland — many on the continent. In many far outposts you saw them listed in your AA directory, sometimes, God Bless them, they were "loners."

You saw Dr. Bob leave the stage, soon after Bill started to talk and you knew that Bill was concerned about him, but almost immediately carried on. That told you something too. You thought of the Traditions, and you knew then, as you had never known before why they renounce leadership and/or authority. You

knew then, that these two men were great spiritual leaders, even though Dr. Bob (or Bill) would probably say, "Now don't louse it up, by calling us names." You asked yourself, where, or when, or how often, in your lifetime, had you heard of men who founded *anything* who did not claim the right of leadership, and *demand* the privilege of authority. These two men were so unselfish, and what you asked yourself is spirituality, if it is not unselfishness, that they want to step down, so that when their time comes to pass on, that nothing that is AA need ever pass with them.

Later you were happy to learn of the General Service Conference Plan, and you thought of the Traditions again — and you had *Faith* that AA had been guided this far by an ever loving God, who would *continue* to manifest himself in an Inter-Group Conscience.

*T.C., Winnipeg, Manitoba*

