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*A monthly journal devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, in the hope that it may prove a unifying bond to all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.*

## *Evidence on the Sleeping Pill Menace*

"John Doe was found dead in bed early this morning. Death was attributed to an overdose of sleeping pills."

The words, "overdose of sleeping pills," have been appearing with increasing frequency of late in the daily press. The story behind them is not always one of intentional suicide. Often it's the story of an accidental death—and often the victim is an alcoholic.

Sleeping pills have also been the subject of urgent warnings to both doctors and laymen in medical journals and popular magazines. For the alcoholic, the warnings should be regarded as special "danger signals."

Barbiturates are defined in the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act as habit forming. For the alcoholic especially, rigid control of such sedatives is vital, and the special danger is the fact that the alcoholic is not likely to control self-administered sedatives any better than he controls alcohol.

There are, of course, other pills or liquids besides phenol barbital, barbital, amytal and other derivatives of barbituric acid which can be dangerous when self-administered. Among the more familiar hypnotics, for instance, is paraldehyde, which also is defined in the federal law as habit forming.

There are still other types of drugs which should not be used without both competent and conscientious medical supervision. Benzadrine is just one that can be mentioned and there are many others—so many that they cannot all be included in this summary. And so many, that the only safe guide for the alcoholic is never to forget that the use of drugs in any association with alcohol, or the effects of alcohol, may have unpredictable results.

The purpose in this article is not to point the finger of blame. The fact is that responsibility for the conditions which are causing alarm must be shared by many—by the careless doc-

tor who prescribes sedatives too casually; the greedy druggist who sells them illegally; the out-and-out dope peddler; lax law enforcement agents and indifferent lawmakers; and, finally, the individual who buys the pills.

Obviously there is imperative need for correction to prevent abuses. Hope that corrective measures are forthcoming may be found in the mounting agitation for better laws and better law enforcement, and in the concern being expressed by medical authorities.

In the meantime, however, the danger remains.

Promiscuous use of sedatives is a fact. It's easy to get pills. At this point, therefore, it's an individual matter in which the buyer should beware.

Anyone who still doubts the risks involved may be awakened by even a brief review of current discussion and reports in various publications. For example, the American Medical Association has issued a booklet containing reprints from issues of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. The opening paper

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## PILLS AND 12th STEP WORK

*(Editor's Note: The following was written by an M.D. who also is an A.A.)*

The wide-spread, unsupervised use of the barbiturate group of drugs, luminal, seconal, nembutol and numerous other derivatives, has created, especially in the last decade, a public health problem which has deeply concerned the medical profession, police, health authorities, and many public-spirited lay people.

The acknowledged inadequacy and lack of uniformity in state and even municipal laws regulating their sale has made it comparatively easy for venal and uninformed people who want to obtain them. All too many otherwise intelligent people use them with a liberality that can only mean they are ignorant of their dangers.

We in A.A. should take a grave and serious interest in the subject, particularly as we come across it in our 12th Step work. It is a startling and uncomfortable fact that 48 per cent of the victims of fatal or non-fatal poisoning by barbiturates admitted to Bellevue Hospital (New York City) were also alcoholics. (Please read that carefully; it does not say that 48 per cent of alcoholics take pills').

The problems of the pill taker are the same as

those of the alcoholic and the pill-taking alcoholic is just as incapable of safely using pills as he is of drinking—he simply doubles his risks. Just as the alcoholic in drinking dulls his awareness of the unpleasant realities of life so does the pill-taker, in perhaps a more insidious manner, reach the stage of fantasy where only pleasant visions, if any, are allowed to obtrude on his consciousness. Unfortunately while pursuing this, to him, laudable objective, the alcoholic winds up dead drunk; the pill-taker on the other hand winds up poisoned. The results are identical; one drinks it and the other swallows it. It hardly requires the brain of an Einstein to figure out what happens when an alcoholic combines the two.

Alcoholics resort to pills to get over a hangover, to prolong a binge in order not to have a hangover, or to fight the insomnia which is a product of their alcoholism. Much too frequently, they are introduced to this form of therapy by their doctor, who is either unaware that they are alcoholic or unaware of alcoholism. Just as frequently, it is the fellow who is always around, that well-known character, the

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# EDITORIAL-

## On the 12th Step...

*"Having had a spiritual experience as the result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

Very few of us know the exact hour and date we had our spiritual experience, and some of us are not conscious of ever having had one at all. However, our changed personalities and perspectives are definite proof that "something" happened to us somewhere along the line *as* those who knew us "when" will attest.

A.A.s refer to the 12th Step as "working with others," and this means we try to help the other person work out his or her problem. From our vast fund of knowledge on the subject, gained from our own actual experiences and often under similar conditions, we are peculiarly qualified to exercise that sympathetic understanding that only another alcoholic can have and which is so important in talking to a person who, like ourselves, is allergic to alcohol. This is the crux of the success obtained by groups throughout the country. This A.A. program, which is responsible for our own sobriety, and for giving us a new lease on life, was handed to us on a silver platter and without monetary cost. It is our bounden duty, therefore, to pass it on in the same manner to those who want it. It was not intended for us to keep to ourselves.

We are admonished to, "Go ye and spread the gospel," and Webster defines gospel as: "Any doctrine concerning human welfare that is agitated as of great importance." Surely, to us alcoholics it is of the utmost importance. We carry out the 12th Step when we share our gift by telling others of the help we have found, by lending encouragement to those who find the way difficult, by making calls when requested to, and by attending meetings to show to the sensitive newcomer that he or she is not alone.

Sobriety, however, is not enough and length of sobriety is not so important as quality of sobriety. The A.A. program is a design for living normal, happy lives, and it is necessary that we practice the principles of tolerance, patience, unselfishness, humility, and that we curb our all too human desire to criticize and bear resentment.

It is Sometimes discouraging to talk to a person who does not immediately respond to our "pearls of wisdom," but right there is where we exercise patience and realize that once the seed has been sown, John Barleycorn is our best salesman. Two years ago O.L. was called upon in New York City and after three or four meetings considered himself "cured," and in no further need of association with the A.A. group. Last week I was called to a hospital here in Atlanta, to interview a patient who turned out to be my old friend O.L. who had sense enough to scream for A.A. and was now "ready" for the entire program. None of us can let our defenses down, for unless we keep everlastingly at it we are doomed.

Persons thank us for showing them the way, and relatives are inclined to credit one or another of us with the recovery of their loved one. It is then that we realize that "Of myself I am nothing"—and we thank the Power greater than ourselves for making us an instrument of His ways.

*T. B., Atlanta, Ga*

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## Humility

*Humility is perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.*

## *The Book Is Born*

*By Bill*

In recent *Grapevine* articles attention has been drawn to the fact that A.A. is still in the process of forming a public relations policy, that failure to crystallize a sound policy could seriously cripple us.

During the first three years of A.A. no one gave a thought to public relations. It was a time of "flying blind," when we feverishly sought the principles upon which we might stay sober and assist the few alcoholics who came around wanting to do likewise. We were entirely preoccupied with the life and death question of personal recovery. It was strictly a man to man affair. We hadn't even agreed upon a name for our movement. There was no literature.

By the fall of 1937 we could count what looked like 40 recovered members. One of us had been sober three years, another two and a half, and a fair number had a year or more behind them. As all of us had been hopeless cases, this amount of time elapsed began to be significant. The realization that we "had found something" began to take hold of us. No longer were we a dubious experiment. *Alcoholics could stay sober. Great numbers perhaps!* While some of us had always clung to this possibility, the dream now had real substance. If 40 alcoholics could recover, why not four hundred, four thousand—even forty thousand?

Once this spectacular notion gripped us, our thinking underwent a sudden change. Our alcoholic imaginations certainly had a field day. By temperament most of us are salesmen, promoters. So we began talking very big. Mere boxcar numbers wouldn't do. We went astronomical. Undoubtedly, we said, this was the beginning of one of the greatest medical, religious and social developments of all time. We would show the medical profession and the sky pilots where they got off! A million alcoholics in America; more millions all over the world! Why, we only had to sober up all these boys and girls (and sell them God) whereupon they would revolutionize society. A brand new world with ex-drunks running it. Just think of that, folks!

Publicity? Why of course! Millions of words! Money? Sure! It would take millions, naturally. The matter of money and publicity would be a cinch—just a campaign of high powered selling directed at our American tycoons and editors would quickly settle that question. How could they resist when they saw what we had? Just watch us drunks. Actually a few of us were pretty nearly as bad as that! No circus barker was ever so enthusiastic or extravagant in his cries as were some of us in  
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# CHICAGO'S NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS

## *Key to Simplicity in a Metropolitan Area*

The first A.A. member in Chicago contacted the Akron group in the fall of 1937 and slowly over the next two years assembled a group of six members, at which time the first formal A.A. meeting was held. Since that time—September 20, 1939—regular weekly meetings have been held in Chicago. It is interesting to note that three of the first six in the group were advised to try A.A. by physicians. Since that time the friendly sympathy of many Chicago physicians of alcoholic patients with whom they had struggled in vain has contributed greatly to the growth of the group.

From the beginning the Chicago group has adhered closely to the A.A. fundamentals as absorbed from the Akron group. The feeling has been that growth should be steady and sound. There has been a considerable amount of favorable publicity in the Chicago newspapers and all of it has been unsought. It is an unspoken tenet of the group that the restoration of each individual to a calm, orderly way of living is of more importance than promoting the group in public. Experience has been that there is a very great power in the example group members have given those who knew them before their entrance on the program.

### Spirit of Simplicity

This spirit of simplicity extends to the activities of the group as a whole. Organization at all times has been only to such extent as to insure against over-organization. Fortunately the Chicago group early in its existence was given this advice by the leader in Akron: When the time is right and you are right, Providence will show you the way.

Six months after the group moved into the Loop for regular Tuesday meetings it became apparent that the general meeting itself was not a proper place for the discussion of business affairs. We, therefore, set up an earlier meeting on the same evening for any matters of business which might come up. This meeting was without officers and any member interested could attend. For lack of a better name it was called the Set-up Meeting. This has continued, although now one member from each neighborhood group attends and at this meeting the members may present for discussion any subject in which their groups are interested.

The plan for the neighborhood groups developed naturally with no impulse to organize for the sake of organization. At about the same time the Set-up Meeting was formed a rather considerable rush of prospects appeared.

Each was sponsored by an older member but there was no arrangement on the part of the group as a whole for meeting or helping the new people except by casual contacts at Tuesday meetings. Two of the older members conceived the idea of an informal bull session with the men under their sponsorship at the time invited to a home to sit around for the evening and discuss any particular problems of their own. This experiment was so successful that other informal gatherings at unstated times were held here and there throughout the city. Presently it became apparent that the idea could well be systematized. The city was divided into 10 areas and a discussion group to meet regularly on Thursday nights was formed in each one. As each group acquired new members it has divided and in some cases subdivided until there are now 60 in the Chicago area. It has been found that the value and pleasure in these group meetings lie in a rather small attendance. Some of these groups have been reluctant to divide because of close association in their early days of A.A. and remain large. The general feeling, however, is that from six to 15 members is the ideal size of a group for a discussion meeting.

Tuesday night meetings in the Loop are at present held in the Engineering Building at 205 West Wacker Drive. This is the fifth meeting-place required by expansion of the group. Many members and their wives have dinner in the building before the meeting. In general the procedure on Tuesday nights follows the early pattern which is a program of speaking conducted by a chairman. The practice now is that four or five speakers, each allotted 10 minutes, give the Tuesday programs.

As time went on the increasing number of newcomers appeared to justify a special instruction meeting. The first of these was held informally in one corner of the large meeting hall by a volunteer older member who gathered the newer ones and talked to them and answered their questions. This haphazard plan was so evidently successful that a definite regular meeting was arranged to precede the main meeting.

Another Tuesday night meeting was organized for the benefit of old members who were concerned with sponsorship.

Even before the Chicago group began its regular Tuesday meetings in the Loop the need for companionship was recognized and met by a Saturday night open house at the home of one of the members. The group soon outgrew the

accommodations of any home and moved the Saturday night festivities into a hotel in Evanston. Members of the far south side soon set up their own Saturday night open house and since then another regular party has been established on the north side and one each on the northwest and west sides.

### The Alano Club

Another activity is the Alano Club on the sixth floor at 189 West Madison Street. This project is sponsored and supported by members of the metropolitan group, administering it separate from the central office but entirely in keeping with A.A. principles and practices. Open house with coffee and cake at the Club follows each Tuesday night meeting. There are regular A. A. meetings at the Club at I P. M. Wednesday and at 8:30 P.M. Friday.

In the experimental field the Chicago group has had success with patients at the Chicago State Hospital on the northwest side of the city. By special arrangement the group has been enabled to send men and women in need of hospitalization and to obtain treatment for them without putting them through the regular process of commitment. Regular A.A. meetings are held at the hospital Wednesday nights, conducted in turn by the neighborhood groups. Members submitting to this course are received into the group without distinction. The results have been good. This work was originally started some four years ago in a small, quiet way with no publicity and we have tried, with considerable success, to continue this program on this basis of as little publicity as possible.

We were fortunate in having the services of a non-alcoholic secretary donated at the beginning of the group. She is still with us, having grown up with the group. Now on a salary basis, she is in charge of the details of the central office at 209 South State Street and has all the experience and tradition of this group as well as the Foundation office at her fingertips, and with an assistant handles all inquiries, visiting firemen, information bureau, and acts as nerve center for the Chicago group.

Throughout its existence the Chicago group has held the belief that its strength as a means of supporting each individual member and as a means of reaching others lies in its adherence to A.A. fundamentals and to simplicity in practice. Early in the group's history it was decided by common consent that any new suggestion, if approved even by a minority, should be given a trial; if it is good it will endure—if it is unwise it will not. That has proved to be sound in every instance. —E. T.

## VINO VIGNETTES: *Thumbnail A.A. Biographies*

"The 2nd Step was a tough one for me," said C. H. "It had me absolutely stopped at first and I might not have gone on if I hadn't sort of regarded A.A. as my last hope.

"You see—I had never been able to accept orthodox religion," continued C. H. "And I knew whatever power greater than myself I turned to would have to be with me all the time and I couldn't carry any Gothic structure around on my back all the time. Finally, I decided to take TRUTH as something I really believed in and could pin my faith on. Then, I made up my mind whenever the going got really tough I'd turn to TRUTH."

All this occurred in the late summer and fall of 1941. No one had to convince C. H. he

was an alcoholic. He says he'd known it for over ten years, had tried to do something about it and had decided he was a hopeless case.

During this ten year period he had read a great deal about alcoholism and had tried to solve the baffling malady. First he had gone regularly to the late Peabody to adjust his mind and body to the controlled drinking of ale and beer. To give the program a real chance C. H. stayed on the wagon for several months, but then Peabody went away and there was a huge alcoholic splash in Greenwich Village. A few years passed and then C. H. visited a psychiatrist who lived in the neighborhood, told him his problems and his desire to cut out everything "except ale and beer."

For seven months he spent one hour a day, five days a week, with this "trainer of malt drinks" but ale and beer remained wild animals for C. H.—it just took a little longer to get drunk but he didn't mind this inconvenience.

By 1940 he had learned he couldn't drink and work, and as he was unable to give up drinking he quit work. In 1941 he heard about A.A. and got some of the pamphlets. They sounded sensible but the only thing was this 2nd Step.

Starting in August, '41, C. H. began attending A.A. meetings in the old clubhouse on 24th Street. He was still drinking; he thought there was no sense in stopping until he felt there was some chance A.A. might be the answer. In November C. H. made up his mind he would try the A.A. program with all the determination he could muster; to him it was the only floating object on a sea of alcohol. To begin properly he knew he must quit drinking and he was in such bad physical condition he was unable to stop. He thought over the possibility of going to a sanatorium and then decided the hundred dollars it would cost would buy an awful lot of liquor if A.A. didn't work. C. H. walked to Bellevue and voluntarily committed himself for six days. It was a terrific fight but he kept TRUTH in mental electric lights and somehow managed to stick it out. His condition was bad, too—it was two weeks before he could hold a coffee cup in one hand.

A few days before Pearl Harbor in December 1941 C. H. took his last drink—he has been completely "dry" ever since. Slowly but surely he has readjusted himself to life as he found new interests and discovered countless things which he had not found time to include in the schedule of an "active alcoholic." His belief in TRUTH has gradually expanded and enlarged. In the four years of his complete dryness he has become increasingly active in A.A. work. It so happens he is available most of the day and at times there is almost a queue of drunks at his place of business waiting to talk to him.

In December, 1944, C. H. called on me in a sanitarium where I was having the alcohol extracted. The change in this man was amazing—he was confident, sure of himself and had found the answer to his problem. The thing that impressed me the most and made me realize he had alcohol really licked was—he could laugh at himself, which he hadn't been able to do in 1941, and during the last four months he has helped me learn to laugh at myself. I think this is a very important unnumbered step.

C. C., Manhattan

### DEFENDS EARLY 12th STEP WORK

The article "Two Classes Who Fade—A Third Finds the Way," in the September 1945 *Grapevine*, seem to me based on misleading classifications, the third one dangerously so. One gets from this article the distinct impression that in proportion to the numbers arriving in A.A. a mere handful remains to work at the program and stay dry.

Since no particular locality was mentioned as the field of observation, it's to be assumed that the author's generalizing conclusions were based on extensive study of the approximately 500 groups now in existence. But let's assume instead that only a group or two, perhaps in a cosmopolitan area, served as research ground for the three classifications—which is more likely the case; for example, Manhattan, of which I'm a member, beginning my third year of sobriety. True, there's a discrepancy between the numbers arriving and those remaining, but it isn't nearly so overwhelmingly negative as indicated.

Large numbers of those placed by the writer of the September article in the first two categories are seldom seen in Manhattan any more. Some have joined groups in the environs, nearer their homes. Some have gone to other parts of the country, establishing groups in the communities where they've settled, or entered groups already under way. Some have been in the military services, some still are. Though they're no longer seen in Manhattan, many of these men and women are still in A.A., sober.

But it's not with the implied statistics, manifestly superficial and incorrect, that I'm especially concerned. The third classification, "those who find the way" and "... do not approach a prospect until they themselves first have the

*program firmly in their minds and are on the straight and narrow path themselves,"* is loaded with atomic energy which, if released among us A.A.s, would surely blast us to smithereens, smashing the newcomers first. This classification, so neat, so orderly and so inexorable, is the one in which I belong—and at the same time, along with countless other A.A.s of my acquaintance who are also staying sober, definitely do not belong.

Certainly I'm not one of those who didn't approach a prospect until I had the program "firmly in mind." I was in A.A. two weeks when, knowing little of the program beyond having read the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and attending meetings, I felt strongly, urgently even, that my immediate salvation lay in trying to help others, and forthwith began, with an older member, doing just that. And I kept on trying, and on and on, and as I continued in my efforts to help other alcoholics the program gradually grew more meaningful, its radiant truths began to emerge and I was able, little by little, to begin applying, one at a time, the 12 Steps to myself and my daily living.

Today, after two and a half years in A.A., I don't have the program "firmly in mind." A program inherent in which is the very soundest admonition of mental hygiene—Know Thyself—is one of growth, not stagnation.

And as for being on a "straight and narrow path," God forbid! That's one of the most valuable lessons to be learned in A.A.—that life is never a straight and narrow path, but winding, divergent, and broad as the A.A. program itself is broad; dynamic, as is our program, to fit the needs of human nature, not static.

M. S., Manhattan

# Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home or Abroad

## On the "Four Absolutes"

*From Manhattan*

Apropos the article from Rochester in your September number, and speaking for myself, I do not like the reference to the "Four Absolutes" in the same sentence with the "12 Steps."

Let's keep the A.A. program simple, and not couple it with any outside religion, creed, or dogma.—J.D.

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## Fair to the Newcomer?

*From Manhattan*

Since I believe that almost without exception alcoholics are deep-rooted individualists, I deplore a tendency I have noted recently among certain A.A. groups to lay down the law to newcomers. I have in mind specifically the article appearing in the September issue of *The Grapevine* regarding the procedure followed by the Genesee group of Rochester, N. Y., in the education of what that group terms "novices." The article invites comment—even to the extent of criticism—so I would like to express my (one individual's) entirely personal views on a subject of seeming importance to the future healthy growth of A.A.

I came into A.A. when the membership numbered approximately 2,000 with the distinct understanding that the only requirement was the honest admission on my part that I had a serious drinking problem and that I sincerely wanted to do something about it (i.e., Step No. 1). Beyond that no one told me what I had to do about anything but it was definitely suggested I attend regular meetings as soon and as often as possible. These meetings were my course of training and membership was up to me, not my sponsor, nor by approval of the group. Let me add hastily, at this point, that I do believe meetings, conducted by older members, at which newcomers can ask questions and present their problems and at which the 12 Steps are explained, are often most helpful. Any other course of instruction seems to me to border on self-righteousness on the part of older members, the anathema of any alcoholic.

Mention is also made of the booklet prepared by the Genesee group for the purpose of preparing a "prospective candidate" for his first meeting. I recently acquired a copy of this booklet which is entitled, "Rudiments of A.A." Again I must take exception to the answer contained therein to a supposed question from a "prospect" or "novice."

"Q. All right—I am an alcoholic and I really want to quit drinking forever. Am I now ready for A.A.?"

"A. Not quite, but you have come a long way. One further step is necessary. You must have a belief in God and faith in His power to help you."

To answer the question of whether or not this is good medicine for the newcomer, let us consider for a moment the 12 Steps of the A.A. program. It will be remembered that there is no mention of "God, as we understand Him," until the 3rd Step, although reference is made to a "Power greater than ourselves" in the 2nd Step. I take it that no A.A., of any experience whatever expects the newcomer to accept or to understand the entire program by the time he is ready for his first meeting. I have never claimed to be agnostic or atheistic but that answer might well have frightened me away from A.A. forever. The spiritual aspect of the program often takes the individual a long time to acquire but faith in a Higher Power eventually comes to us if we continue to have faith in the group and endeavor to the best of our ability to help others.

Finally, although I have been "dry" now some four and one-half years, which is, of course, comparatively unimportant as long as I remain "dry" for the current 24 hours, I am unenlightened and probably a little stupid and have not yet learned what comprise the Four Absolutes. For me the 12 Steps seem to be sufficiently well thought out to assure permanent sobriety if I remember to work on them all and don't become careless or complacent. However, "God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform" and what keeps me sober may not be the answer for the next guy, so good luck to the members of the Genesee group, even if I don't agree with a few of their ideas.—A.T.

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## Peace in A.A.

*From Los Angeles, Cal.*

In the days of planning for world peace, we are reminded of the new Peace found by members of Alcoholics Anonymous. While drinking, we all had that inner feeling of unrest. There was always a sort of conflict within us—plus fears—with and without cause. A sense of guilt was always present.... Even during the periods, when we "went on the wagon" we did not find complete relief. In fact, "going on the wagon" actually added another strain to our already taut nerves.... Then to ease the situation, we got drunk. We eased it—by a counter-irritating method. We multiplied many fold the effects above mentioned to the point they often became tragic... and we never found Peace ... (until A. A. ). —H. E.

## Ours Is Not the Only Way

*From Knoxville, Tenn.*

A non-alcoholic friend who had been listening to me spout about A.A. at some length the other night asked me if we weren't a little presumptuous in thinking that A.A. was the only way for a man to stay sober.

I explained, naturally, that we didn't think A.A. was the only way. But that got me to thinking. Maybe we do give that impression to people. We naturally talk it so much because it's our life, but we may be misunderstood. I think perhaps we should take advantage of any opportunity to explain that if a man can get sober some other way, all power to him. Just because we like the A.A. way and because it is the only thing that has worked for a good many of us after we've tried everything else, doesn't mean we should forget there are other ways and other alcoholics who have recovered without A.A. Let's not get grabby about credit.—E.R.

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## Foretelling "Slips"

*From Mobile, Ala.*

I would like to see a discussion started in the "letters to the editor" department on why "slips" occur.

My theory is that anyone can foretell the coming of a "slip" in time to avoid it if he does something about it. I don't think anyone has ever had a "slip" that he couldn't look back on and discover there were danger signs he either ignored purposely or didn't recognize.

In my case, if I find myself griping about people or things, I know that I'd better do something quick. I learned that from a "slip." That "slip" was preceded by a mental attitude best expressed by the old saying, "Everybody's out of step except me."

There are many other causes, of course. I think anyone who looks hard enough can see them.—M.Y.

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## This War Goes On

*From the Pacific*

I thank God that it is all over now and the enemy has been decisively defeated and that soon we can all come home and once again live a normal life.

That is true for some, but for you and me and the rest of our alcoholic friends our war is still on. We are fighting on enemy that can't be wiped out, not even with an atomic bomb. He is always dangerous and deadly and always

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## The Book Is Born

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the fall of 1937. In fact, I can recall having done a great deal of the barking myself!

Now suppose the promoters of those pioneering days had not been slowed down. Suppose that our public relations policy had been left fully in their hands. Suppose they had been able to raise millions, to flood the country with A.A. propaganda and wild claims. Where would we be now? Nowhere, obviously. We would not only have fallen out with our best friends, religion and medicine; we would surely have been discredited among the very people we wished most to reach—alcoholic men and women. Much money would have meant a large staff of professional A.A. therapists or "do gooders," and promoters plus money would surely have meant ballyhoo on every subject under the sun from prohibition to Communist Russia. Internally, if we still existed at all, we would have been torn apart by political controversy, religious dissension. It happened to the Washingtonians. Who, then, has saved us thus far?

The people who did the saving job then, and who have continued to save us much trouble since, are a class of individuals with whom most A.A.s are impatient. *These people are the conservatives.* They are the "go slow," "think it over," "let's not do that" type. Not many of them are to be found among us alcoholics but it's certainly providential that we have always had a few such around. Often accused of being a drag on progress (as they sometimes are) they are nevertheless a priceless asset. They bring the rest of us down out of the clouds; they make us face the realities of experience; they foresee dangers which most of us would blithely ignore. Sometimes their conservatism is overdone; they needlessly "view with alarm for the good of the movement." Knowing that mere change is not necessarily progress they instinctively resist change. They never wish to take an irrevocable step; they often shrink from those final decisions from which there is no retreat. They keep out of trouble by making sure never to get into it.

The first discussion of our public relations in 1937 at Akron will always live in my memory. The promoters could think of nothing but getting the glad news of our recoveries to a million alcoholics, overnight if possible. If this were done, God would do the rest, they said. But the conservatives did not think God did business that way.

The conservatives then proceeded, with terrific impact, to make the point that The Man of Galilee had no press agent, no newspapers, no pamphlets, no books—nothing but word of mouth to carry the spirit from person to person, from group to group. Why should we devi-

ate from His example? Were we about to substitute ballyhoo for personal demonstration? Were we to favor personal glorification in public in place of quietness, humility and anonymity?

These were good questions; they made us promoters stop and think. Though obliged to concede much to the conservatives on principle, we still felt their counsel was that of perfection. It wasn't practical. The conservatives retorted that while promoters had built many a successful enterprise they almost always bankrupt what they had built if they were left long enough in charge. We promoters (and I was one of them) came back with this: How, we inquired, could the "go slow boys" sleep nights when they reflected that after three long years we had produced but three small groups; that America had a million alcoholics dying like flies; that within gunshot of where we sat there were perhaps hundreds who could get well if they only knew what we knew? And did alcoholics in California have to wait for relief to get there by word of mouth only? And wasn't there grave danger of our successful methods being badly distorted unless reduced to writing and put in book form? And if we made no written record of what we had found, might not columnists get funny and start deadly ridicule? Caution, we agreed, ought to be observed by all means, but still didn't we need a book of our own, some publicity?

Such was the gist of the discussion out of which come the decision to publish the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This led to publicity, to the establishment of our Board of Trustees (The Alcoholic Foundation), and to the creation of the Central Office at New York where alcoholics and their families can write for literature and direct help. Our rapid and seemingly healthy growth the past few years has pretty well demonstrated the wisdom of these early decisions.

The point is obvious. If these vital matters had been left entirely to the promoters like me, we would surely have gone hog wild and spoiled everything. Had these affairs been left exclusively to the conservatives it is probable that few of our present membership would yet have heard of A.A. Thousands would have remained miserable. Many would have been dead.

So it seems clear that sound policy can only be made by rubbing the conservatives and the promoters together. Their discussions, if free from personal ambitions and resentment, can be depended upon to produce the right answers. For us, there is no other way.

Having now shown how our first step in public relations was taken, I would like, in forthcoming pieces, to tell more of our recent experiences in this field, with emphasis on the desirability, of continued modesty, anonymity, and fidelity to one objective only: That of carrying A.A. to the alcoholic who wishes to recover.

## Pills and 12th Step Work

(Continued from Page 1)

well-meaning and, of course, completely misinformed friend.

In defense of the doctors it should be pointed out that the barbiturates with proper precautions are very useful and effective drugs. Doctors, moreover, are realizing more and more that alcoholics should not be given the opportunity to dose themselves for an unlimited period. Active alcoholics, drunk or sober, should never have access to unlimited doses of barbiturates. Acting on the usual assumption that if a little is good, a lot is better, they often step up the dose or the frequency of doses. When drinking, they almost invariably forget when they took the last dose or how much they did take. The result is a tragedy or a near tragedy and, make no mistake about it, in a city of any size these are daily occurrences. (In a very limited experience, I have personally witnessed this four times.)

There is no defense for well-meaning friends and particularly A.A.s who cannot help but be aware of the dangers involved, especially if they have had any experience with 12th Step work. They are completely ignorant about such factors as drug idiosyncrasy, early signs of poisoning, and most important, and the most variable of all, the margin between the therapeutic dose and the toxic dose. This margin is different for each and every one of the members of the barbiturate group and when the patient has also been drinking it is extremely difficult and usually impossible for even an experienced physician to estimate it.

When, in the course of 12th Step work, you run into prospects who need medication or who have been dosing themselves, you should turn them over to medical supervision. A prospect in that condition is not able to grasp or comprehend what you are driving at. To steer the prospect to this supervision is a self-imposed obligation and occasionally the prospect, because of gratitude, will give you an opportunity to approach him on A.A. Do not delude yourself, however, in feeling that when you give medicinal or custodial care, you are doing A.A. work—your job only begins when the other ends.

Should you have a prospect who is a habitual user of pills bear in mind the following revealing fact: A recent study of chronic users of barbiturates showed that 70.9 per cent of the pill-takers were found to be psychopathic personalities. These unfortunate individuals need to sober up, of course, but they also need intensive psychiatric help. Their drinking and their drug taking is a symptom, *not* a disease.. We in A.A. should only concern ourselves with individuals whose *disease* is alcoholism.

L.M.D.

# A.A. 's Country-Wide News Circuit

A new group is under way in Silver Spring, Md., offshoot of Washington, D. C.; Mansfield, Ohio's original group has reached the point where they've organized group No. 2, so that the personal interest element can be maintained effectively; and Jacksonville, Fla., A.A.s, their aid enlisted by the Florida parole commission and prison officials, have gotten a group going in the state prison at Raiford. The Jacksonvillians in turn will be aided by traveling members—those with both tires and gas—from groups in Miami, West Palm Beach, Daytona Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Pensacola, Sarasota and Tampa.... Lodi, Calif., with 17 members, has celebrated its first anniversary. ... So has the Bronx, N. Y., Group. More than 300 attended the Bronx anniversary dinner. Bobbie B., national secretary, representatives of the medical profession, an editor, a publisher and a clergyman were among the speakers.

\* \* \*

Members of the Rock Hill and Columbia, (S. C.) Groups have been driving to Chester, S. C., every other Wednesday night to help in the formation of a new group in Chester.

\* \* \*

Latest reports from Fort Smith, Ark., disclose that the group there now numbers an even dozen active members. The group was founded last February.... The Troy, N. Y., Group will be host Oct. 14 to the inter-city

## WASHINGTON, D. C., HAS NEW CLINIC FOR ALCOHOLICS

Long-sought psychiatric help for Washington, D. C. alcoholics is now available at the volunteer clinic in Room 6145 of Municipal Center. Despite its modest beginning, the clinic, which grew out of proposals from A.A., marks a long step forward in the scientific treatment of alcoholics. In operation two full days a week, it is working in close cooperation with A.A. Dr. Michael M. Miller, psychiatrist of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, who volunteered his services, is conducting the clinic with the assistance of Dr. Ruth E. Stocking, also a volunteer. Precautions have been taken to keep the clinic entirely separate from jails, courts and punishment institutions, although judges are expected to parole alcoholics into the care of the clinic for treatment rather than punishment. Dr. Miller has said there will be a three-point program, consisting of physical care first, then mental, and finally the patients will be turned over to A.A.

meeting of the Albany, Schenectady, Glen Falls, Utica and Troy Groups. The program now being arranged will include both local and down-state speakers.

\* \* \*

Members of the Philadelphia Group have opened up a new outlet for diffusing information about A.A. by enlisting the interest of E. G. Budd, Jr., of the Edward G. Budd Manufacturing Co. As the result of a letter to Mr. Budd, from an A.A. employe (F.H.C.), a series of articles on A.A. has been appearing in the company's magazine, *Buddgette*.

\* \* \*

Another new A.A. clubhouse has been opened, this one in Schenectady, N. Y.... Twenty-five members from Barre, Stowe and Waterbury, their cars also rolling once more, attended a meeting of the Montpelier, Vt., group.

\* \* \*

One of Manhattan's newer gatherings is a dinner-discussion meeting held every other Wednesday night at 135 Broadway by business and professional men. These meetings are serving to acquaint key business men in New York with A.A. and thus widen our sphere of influence. ... Besides a talk by Marty M., a big social evening and a banquet, Des Moines, Iowa, A.A.s will feature on their second anniversary program Oct. 27 and 28 a discussion meeting for all Iowa groups. "Propositions" to be hashed over will include sponsorship, "sliperoo department," publicity, and club management.

\* \* \*

The Archbishop of Boston, His Excellency, Most Reverend Richard J. Gushing, was principal speaker at the first anniversary meeting of the original Dorchester Group. Since the founding of this group, two others have been started in Dorchester, giving this large residential section of the city of Boston three A.A. units in operation.

\* \* \*

New Jerseyites' band made its debut on V-J Day at the big A.A. clubhouse in Newark while 500 dancing, singing, rumless revelers consumed 2,500 bottles of soft drinks, 40 gallons of ice-cream and an unmeasured quantity of coffee. The celebrants came from Irvington, Trenton, Morristown, Maplewood, East Orange, Plainfield and other groups representing Essex, Morris and Union counties.... The Newark Group also recently conducted a unique meeting titled "Information Please." A.A. questions were fired at a panel of experts made up of four older A.A. members with a fifth playing the role of Clifton Fadiman.... A New Jersey member recently outlined the A.A. program be-

fore the Summit Rotary Club, as did a Massachusetts member in Salem, with A.A.s and Rotarians alike attending from Beverly, Danvers, Ipswich, Lynn, Marblehead, Peabody, Somerville, Waltham and North Adams.... And a Burlington, Vt. A.A. addressed the congregation of the Congregational Church in Waterbury.

\* \* \*

The growing Peekskill, N. Y. Group, outgrowth of the flourishing one in While Plains, was told by guest speaker, City Judge Thomas C. Macpherson, that courts for the most part consider alcoholics as "sick men and not as criminals," that he could see no help for alcoholics by sending them to jail, and that "A.A. is doing a splendid job by providing the law enforcing agencies and the penal institutions with such an organization."... The young man who started the Albuquerque, N. M. Group which includes many ranchers as well as business and professional men and women, says a sponsor from Denver, Colo., showed him how to start the ball rolling.... A Greenwood, Miss., member reports that for a year he and another man made the 95-mile trip to Memphis meetings, as did others from the neighboring countryside, until they banded together in March 1945 and formed the Greenwood Group, which now has 28 members scattered over a range of 50 miles, coming from Coffeerville, Drew, Cleveland, Mari-gold, Charleston, Leland, Indianola, Winona, Kosouisko, Vaiden, and Craig.

## FIRST SOUTHERN REGIONAL MEET SET FOR OCT. 8

Birmingham, Ala., A.A.s will act as hosts and hostesses at the first regional meeting to be held by southern groups Oct. 8.

The Tutwiler Hotel in Birmingham will be the scene of the meeting, which will open with a breakfast at 9 A.M., featuring three talks by A.A.s from out of the state. Five other out-of-state speakers will be heard at the meeting to be called at 2 P.M.

Chauncey Sparks, governor of Alabama, and members of the newly created Alabama Commission on Education with Respect to Alcoholism, will be among the most interested guests at the banquet to be held in the Terrace ballroom of the Tutwiler that evening. Dr. W. D. Partlow, chairman of the commission, will speak briefly and Marty M. will give the principal talk at the banquet. She will remain in Birmingham to meet the following day with the commission.

# Evidence on the Sleeping Pill Menace

(Continued from Page 1)

in this booklet is entitled, A STUDY OF THE PROMISCUOUS USE OF THE BARBITURATES, by W. E. Hambourger, Ph. D., of Cleveland, reprinted from the April 8, 1939, edition of *The Journal*. Excerpts follow:

"At a meeting of the American Medical Association in June, 1937, a resolution was introduced on the 'Evils from Promiscuous Use of Barbituric Acid and Derivative Drugs.... The evils of these drugs include habit formations, toxic cumulative action, their substitution for alcoholic beverages for drunken episodes, their use for successful as well as unsuccessful suicidal attempts, their improper use being recognized as the causative factor in many motor accidents and their improper use being a recognized etiologic factor in some criminal assaults\_\_\_\_\_'"

## Huge Amounts Sold

Dr. Hambourger summarizes this chapter of his paper with six points, two of which are particularly significant to alcoholics:

"1. More than 1,200,000,000 grains of barbituric acid derivatives were sold in the United States in 1936\_\_\_\_\_"

"6. The number of suicides by barbiturates has shown a definite upward trend...."

In the second chapter of the paper, Dr. Hambourger stated at one point:

"... That the constitutional heritage of the individual is an important factor in the development of barbiturate habit is, however, amply demonstrated.... Curran (F.J.) says: 'Any substance... which through its central action tends to soften the emotional stresses and to render less tedious the everyday experiences of life may be a factor in the development of habituation...; There is much evidence to support the thesis that the administration of sedatives and hypnotic drugs to the emotionally

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unstable is fraught with the possibility of inducing habituation....' "

An editorial from *The Journal* also is reprinted in the booklet. Two of its most significant paragraphs follow:

"The barbituric addiction is particularly vicious. Members of the medical profession will certainly not believe that barbiturates are free from the possibility of addiction....

"The Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry has long adopted the altitude that the practice of using nonvolatile substances as anesthetics, especially in inexperienced hands, is not safe. ... More rigid enforcement of restrictions on the prescribing of these potentially dangerous drugs- has the wholehearted approval of the Council and of *The Journal*...."

In *The New York State Journal of Medicine*, October, 1943, may be found other pertinent discussion in a report on a conference, "Treatment of Poisoning by the Barbiturates." Here are a few excerpts from the record of the conference:

## Fatalities Increase

"Dr. Milton Helpert:... The statistics of the Chief Medical Examiners Office, which are compiled annually, show a definite increase in the number of fatal poisonings by the various barbiturate compounds... There are a few instances in which an alcoholic individual has taken a large dose of barbiturates, and it is questionable whether or not, although the act was deliberate, the intent was that of suicide. . -. In most suicidal cases, the individual takes barbiturate medication which has already been prescribed for him. There seems to be a rather indiscriminate or careless prescribing of barbiturate compounds for patients who are suffering from chronic alcoholism, nervous disorders, and depressions.... The patient should not be given or allowed to accumulate an amount of barbiturate which if taken at one time. would be sufficient to cause death...."

Among lay publications which have published articles recently on the use of barbiturates is *The Reader's Digest* which in its May, 1945, issue printed a condensation of an article, "Sleeping Pills Aren't Candy," by Rita Halle Kleeman, that appeared originally in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Excerpts from this article follow:

"We would be outraged at the suggestion that we are becoming a nation of drug fiends. Nevertheless, as long ago as 1939 there were enough users of sleeping pills—'barbiturates' to the doctors, 'goof balls' or 'red devils' or 'yellow jackets' to the addict—to account for the sale of 2, 200, 000 doses a day. Today, with the worries, griefs and readjustments of lives

and hours caused by the war, the figures show that we are using almost three times as much.

"In New York City, there were five times as many accidental deaths from their use, or misuse, in 1942 as there were in 1937. In San Francisco, accidents from them increased 150 per cent from 1940 to 1944.

"Their continued use leads to shattered nerves and to strange psychological effects, varying from stimulation in 'certain combinations to drowsiness, coma and death. All these dangers are heightened when the drugs are taken by people with kidney trouble or in combination with alcohol...."

## Sales Often Illicit

Included in recent references to the subject in the daily press was a news story in the *New York World-Telegram* which reported:'

"There has been an alarming rise in deaths from barbiturates, or sleeping pills, which are being sold illicitly.... Dr. Thomas Gonzales, chief medical examiner, said today. War neurotics and alcoholics, attempting to sooth shattered nerves, have helped increase sales, he declared.

" 'It is entirely too easy for persons who want to quiet jangled nerves to obtain these hypnotics. Alcoholics, attempting to recover from a prolonged spree, dope addicts who cannot obtain narcotics and even worried parents of servicemen are purchasing these tablets.... What percentage of reported deaths are accidental or how many are suicides cannot be determined. But one thing is certain—we must have more stringent laws covering hypnotics if we would curb the illicit trade....' "

(To be continued in the November issue)

## Letters

(Continued, from Page 5)

on the alert, just waiting for an opening. We have no radar to detect him—we never know when or where he will strike. So we must always be on our guard—always alert and ever on the defensive. However, - we do have one thing in our favor, or I should say several—our ammunition is free (A.A.) and we have the help of a Supreme Power (God) if we just ask for it. What can beat that combination? Compare the results of the two battles (World War II and ours against alcohol). ' We have won one at a tremendous cost, both in lives and money—we can win the other with a tremendous saving in both lives and money. It sure is -worth fighting ours to a finish. So; now that World War II is over,' let's not relax. We have a real war to fight, one that will never end but that will pay rich dividends and give us happiness, contentment and love as long as we successfully fight it.

Dick F. M., Sgt., USMCR  
Marine Fighter Squadron