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The national monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, with the hope that it will help all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.

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Our Blessings Prove Real Miracle of A.A.

Family Groups Make Headway In California

Treatment of non-alcoholic members of the alcoholic's family is one of the outstanding innovations being practiced by the Signal Hill, Calif., Family Group which is reported following the lead of San Pedro.

Each adult member of the family is an active, voting member of the group and children attend the meetings and grow up in the traditions of philosophy of the A.A. fellowship. Separate weekly meetings are held for alcoholics and non-alcoholics and all are welcome to attend the meetings of the others.

The Akron procedure is practiced at both meetings, the same 12 Steps and 12 principles are embraced except that the non-alcoholic group eliminates the word "alcohol" from their personal problem. The philosophy is used to correct difficulties caused by long association with the alcoholic and his new way of life is made simpler by the understanding acquired by his family.

The San Pedro Group has held two annual open meetings to which such outsiders as judges, law enforcement officers, doctors and welfare workers received special invitations. Results were so good that the recent first anniversary meeting of the Signal Hill Group was the first annual open meeting with about 100 visitors responding to the invitation, including the mayor, two councilmen, two judges from Los Angeles courts, two probation officers from Long Beach, several police officers, a doctor and a clergyman.

From Chicago, Ill.

WHAT'S on my mind right now is nothing more serious, thank God, than a moving sense of gratitude for the blessings I have received, without remotely deserving them, and for the truths I have been induced to accept entirely and exclusively through Alcoholics Anonymous. This is combined with an intense feeling that I am obligated to express this gratitude and make of it a helpful, dynamic thing by my day-to-day actions much more than by mere words. Still, by letting off steam I may crystallize my thoughts into action; at any rate it will provide a starting point and a reminder of my tremendous indebtedness to A.A.

After all, talking does comprise a very large hunk of our social intercourse; and when someone presumes to talk, someone else is stuck at the listening post—as any married man will testify. Furthermore, any A.A. knows that only by listening can he get the stimulation of the other fellow's slant, and only by sounding off can he ante in to sweeten the kitty of general understanding. We have to take turns. As it happens, right now I am convinced that in my thinking and acting I should strive to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.

How can I play up the positive, play down the negative? Well, within the wonderful fellowship of A.A. itself I can begin by de-emphasizing the tiny percentage of our temporary failures. I can quit donning a long face and whispering about "Poor Lushwell, who wouldn't take our word for it and is now stopping at the Workingman's Rest on Madison Street," or about "Good old Chlorine, she's back with us but her buttons have gone bye-bye and her slip is still showing." Compar-

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You Can Take It With You!

The question of whether an A.A. could take the program with him while on a trip outside of the United States was decided in a few hours recently in A.A.'s Central Office in New York.

An A.A., en route to Europe, stopped by the office to pose the question: What would she do about her sobriety while away from her group on an extended trip?

A few minutes' conversation showed that the A.A. would be aboard the Queen Elizabeth. "Oh," said one of the secretaries, "we have another A.A. traveling with her husband to Europe aboard the same ship. I'll try to get you two together." A telephone call did the trick.

About an hour later, another A.A. stopped by and announced that he was leaving for Europe aboard the Queen Elizabeth.

The second day out, the three A.A.s held a meeting at sea.

NOTICE, CORRESPONDENTS!

To meet new printing schedules, copy for *The A.A. Grapevine* must be received in our office by the **FIRST** of the month to appear in the following month's issue. Group correspondents are urged to adhere to this new deadline.

EDITORIAL:

On the 7th Step

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings"

Few are so fortunate that the change implied in this Step comes about easily or quickly. For the majority, considerable effort is required to gain the desired outlook.

Both intellectual and emotional conditioning is called for here. The intellectual seems the easier, as it is so often in applying other Steps and other A.A. principles and propositions. Getting the intellectual understanding usually comes first; getting "the feel" of the idea is more difficult.

Another way of expressing the difference between the two degrees or departments of understanding is that the idea may be accepted in the conscious mind without penetrating to the subconscious, and it is in the subconscious that the emotional drive is generated. The terms used to define the process differ according to individuals, but apparently a full understanding of the 7th Step needs to be achieved on two levels which some call intellectual and emotional, or conscious and subconscious.

From the experience of many who did not achieve this full understanding easily comes much encouragement. They testify that the mind and the spirit, the conscious and even the subconscious, can be conditioned favorably even as the body. Though the process requires perseverance, many have done it.

First, they point out, the myth of man's own self-sufficiency needs to be dispelled. This is not too difficult if one begins by listing only a few of the things on which man depends for his survival and which are beyond his own limited power to supply. Even such an elemental thing as oxygen is enough to lay the premise that man depends on some other source or power greater than himself.

The distance from this premise to the idea of a Supreme Power is not as great as when the individual was still entertaining the illusion that he was self-sustaining, that he could do it himself, his way. Once this point of development has been reached, common sense points the rest of the way. Having discovered that there is a greater Power, it's no more than good sense to make use of It in all possible ways, and to ask for the removal of those defects that we could not remove ourselves.

The mystery of the 7th Step is that it works with a fairly simple technique. The secret of some magic formula does not first have to be discovered. Rather, results are obtained merely by reminding oneself of the existence of the Power which he already admits does exist, coupled with a reminder of one's own desire and willingness to rely on It.

Frequent enough reminders develop a new way of thinking, as many who once were skeptics, cynics, agnostics or even atheists, now gladly testify. The new way of thinking is the way to the "personality changes" that are common in A.A.

POTENT PROOF FOUND IN 12th STEP

The Bulletin (Midwest Council on Alcoholism, Inc.), Minneapolis, Minn.: "Practicing the 12th Step in particular will help to promote an understanding of the 2nd Step. It so often demonstrates the operation of a Power greater than ourselves. No group of ex-drunks or any other mortals could alone bring about the miracles that are accomplished so often in 12th Step work. Bit by bit, if not suddenly, even the most doubting will eventually be able to say, too, that he 'came to believe.' "

Prayer Answered Ten Years Later

From Harrisburg, Pa.

In 1937, ten years ago, I began to grope in the dark for the life I have found through the 12th Step work of A.A. It is the way of life I searched so long for.

My life was a complete mess. I felt beaten and frustrated. Where was I going? What could I do about it? I was 22 and had been drinking steadily for four years. For a year I had owned my own business and then it was gone with the faith of the woman who had made it possible.

Unconsciously in a prayer I covered several of the Steps but the important first one was missing. I put my prayer away with other aimless dreams and proceeded on my alcoholic way. I came upon this prayer again about a month ago and the whole series of events came sharply into focus. It was one of the things from which I had been escaping. Before this reaches you I will have made amends to a kind and bewildered friend. On her advice I sold the few things left of the business and decided on a new start. The following Christmas she gave me a note stating that my debt to her was paid in full. It has taken ten years to make amends for my past behavior. The prayer follows:

Supplication

Dear God, teach me to be patient; to be steadfast to myself; to be true to the ideals I have set for myself. Never let me grow weak before I have atoned for the unhappiness I have caused others. Teach me the way of atonement and help me to bring to those I have hurt and wronged the thought that I regret my behavior and I earnestly beg their forgiveness.

Oh God, let me see the light, that I may live as others live, love and be loved as others are. Give me strength of purpose, soundness of mind and health of body to accomplish my reconciliation with the world.—*Grace.*

National Roundup In Texas Cancelled

Postponement of the national A.A. roundup and barbecue planned by Top-O'-Texas Group of Amarillo has been announced through *The Weekly Bulletin* of that group.

Originally announced in *The Bulletin* for June 16-18, later discussions brought out that delayed opening of the clubhouse, lunchrooms and other activities, together with crowded conditions in hotels, made it advisable to defer plans.

Adequate Hospitalization . . . One Great Need

By Bill

Despite the general effectiveness of the A. A. program we often need the help of friendly agencies outside A. A.

Nowhere is this more strikingly true than in the field of hospitalization. Most of us feel that ready access to hospitals and other places of rest and recuperation borders on absolute necessity. While many an alcoholic has somehow got over his bender without medical aid, and while a few of us hold the view that the hard "cold turkey" method is the best, the vast majority of A. A.s believe the newcomer whose case is at all serious has a much better chance of making the grade if well hospitalized at the outset. Indeed we see many cases where recoveries without medical help would seem virtually impossible, mentally so beclouded have they become, even when temporarily sober.

Aids Receptivity

The primary purpose of hospitalization is not to save our prospect the pain of getting sober; its real purpose is to place him in the state of greatest possible receptivity to our A. A. program. Medical treatment clears his brain, takes away his jitters, and if done at a hospital he is kept there under control so that everybody knows just where and when he can be visited. Moreover, the atmosphere of most hospitals is extremely conducive to a good first presentation of A. A. The very fact that he has now landed in a hospital impresses the new man with the seriousness of his situation. If he has gone there voluntarily (which should be the case if at all possible) he usually regards hospitalization as the actual beginning of his sobriety. It puts, as it were, a "period" to his drinking. It is an admission that he needs help; that his drinking is out of control; that he cannot do the job alone. Often enough, hospitalization is the event that beautifully clears his path to acceptance of that all important 1st Step:

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable."

With each passing year we increasingly realize the immense importance of adequately presenting the program to every new prospect who is in the least inclined to listen. Many of us feel this to be our greatest obligation to him and our failure to do so our greatest dereliction. The difference between a good approach and a bad one can mean life or death to those who seek our

help. We have seen excellent prospects who received nothing but our brief and casual notice continue their stumbling journey to the undertaker, while seemingly impossible cases who had received careful and considerate attention recovered on the spot or later came back and found their sobriety.

This careful and considerate attention can nowhere be better given than in the confines of a hospital. More and more, A. A. groups are adopting the idea of "sponsorship." Each newcomer is assigned a reasonably stable A. A. member whose ward he becomes during his brief period of introduction to our way of life. The "sponsor" helps make hospital arrangements, takes his man there, visits him frequently and sees that he is visited by other A. A.s whose experience might be specially helpful. Hence a prospect so handled has received a powerful shot of A. A. and a good preview of what our society is like before he ever goes to a meeting. At The hospital he has time to soberly think through his situation, read our literature and exchange impressions with other alcoholics who are going through the same process. Contrast this with the frequent situation in which, for lack of hospitalization, the sponsor has to try to "taper off" his prospect at home or drag him, half dazed, to an A. A. meeting where the new man proceeds to get a lot of confused impressions or unfounded prejudices. While many of us have made our first contact with A. A. under these unfavorable circumstances, and have stuck nevertheless, there are probably many who do not slick on such a poor contact; people who

might have remained with us had they been properly hospitalized and sponsored.

So, out of what is now a huge experience, our conclusions are these: That hospitalization is imperative in many cases and because the hospital provides such a firm basis for good sponsorship it is desirable even in the less serious situations if the prospects are drinking or "foggy" when contacted. They definitely have a better chance if hospitalized.

Until recently few hospitals have wanted us alcoholics. We almost never got really well; we were hard to manage and disturbed other patients; we were regarded as sinners more than as sick people and, as a class, we were financially irresponsible. The average hospital management has always said, and with good reason, "Why bother with drunks? We can scarcely handle the people who are 'legitimately' sick, people we can really do something for. Sobering up drunks is a sheer waste of time and money."

Attitude Changing

Happily this attitude is changing because it is now becoming clear to physicians and public alike that a true alcoholic is really sick, however lacking in character he may be. Hope has now taken the place of centuries of despair that anything much could be done for problem drinkers. A. A. and other agencies are now proving that recovery is possible to hundreds of thousands and that adequate hospital care can and must play a vital part in this process.

Though the trend is now in the right direction it has not yet produced any large scale result. Except the fortunate few, most A. A. groups are up against it. Reasonably priced or free hospital accommodation for alcoholics is still woefully scarce. Each group has to do the best it can.

Let's take stock, therefore, of what is generally available today and what kind of relations we can best cultivate with existing agencies. Let us also consider what part we ought to play in securing improved hospitalization.

Many A. A.s have been state asylum inmates. While our treatment at these institutions has been far better than many suppose, it is a fact that the average asylum superintendent still prefers to handle insane persons. The average mental case stays put for a while. Then too, for mental cases an asylum could feel it was really doing something, either by way of custody or cure. But The average alcoholic, unless permanently insane, was a headache. Brought in temporarily balmy he would promptly recover his sanity, at least legally speaking, and

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Dr. Silkworth Honored By New York A.A.s

More than 1,000 A.A.s attended a special Intergroup meeting in New York recently, a testimonial to Dr. W. D. Silkworth, of The Chas. B. Towns and Knickerbocker Hospitals.

Dr. Silkworth not only endorsed the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, when it was first published, but has worked tirelessly for more than ten years to lead sick alcoholics to A.A.

Bill, who was helped tremendously by the little doctor even before A.A. assumed any importance, led the tribute.

The degree of interest among A.A.s in the meeting was emphasized by the fact that some 500 persons had to be turned away from the Engineering Auditorium where the meeting was held!

Adequate Hospitalization . . . One Great Need

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would clamor to get out only to return in days or weeks. No wonder the average institution disliked alcoholics.

Now that so many of us are coming out of asylums to stay, the authorities are everywhere becoming more cooperative. In many institutions the alcoholics able and willing to recover are placed in a ward of their own. They are no longer mingled with the insane. Visiting A. A.s are admitted and meetings are held within the walls. While no asylum can, of course, be used as a simple sobering-up place only, it is true that asylum doctors are now often willing to take cases on less evidence of psychosis than formerly, provided they and the nearby A. A. group feel that a permanent recovery is possible. The doctors are also more willing to commit promising patients for much briefer periods and liberate earlier those who seem to be making good A. A. progress. So any A. A. group near an asylum which contains alcoholics capable of recovery can usually form these desirable relationships with the authorities but they should *never* try to tell the doctors how to run the place! We must never blame any doctor who has not yet seen A. A. at work for his skepticism. Let us remember he probably has good reason to be that way!

Cooperation Growing

Our experience with public hospitals in large cities has been varied. Here we usually find much reluctance to keep our good prospects even a few days, unless, of course, they happen to be delirious, psychotic, or physically injured. These hospitals feel they have no right to use precious beds to sober up run-of-the-mill drunks. But as public hospitals become aware that we are bringing recovery to a substantial number of their regular habitues they become more hopeful and cooperative. Visiting privileges are extended to us and promising cases are kept several days. The development of these relations takes place slowly. The hospital has to be thoroughly convinced that we are bringing recovery to enough patients to justify any special consideration. Because public hospitals are mostly free or very moderate in their charges, we too often abuse our privileges. We are tempted to ask special treatment for "slippees" who have no present idea of stopping drinking; we often insist on visiting at all hours and in any numbers; we are likely to brag about A. A. as the only remedy for alcoholism and thus incur the displeasure of hard working nurses and doctors who might otherwise be glad to help us. But these natural

mistakes are usually corrected and we finally come up with a friendly, clear-cut relationship which is often handled in large A. A. centers through our Intergroup Central Offices or hospital committees.

Private Doctors Helpful

We enjoy fine privileges with many private sanitariums and "drying out" places. Occasionally the reverse has been true. Here and there we have found some tendency to exploit alcoholics—too much sedative, too many "tapering off" drinks, too long and too expensive stays, an inclination to misuse the A. A. name for business purposes, etc. But these tendencies are disappearing. It is realized, even by those who might be tempted to take liberties with us, that cooperation with A. A. is more profitable in the long run than non-cooperation. But it must always be remembered that on the whole our treatment at these places is good—some of them are staffed by the warmest friends we have. I cannot forget that the first physician ever to take a serious and helpful interest in us is still a staff member of a private hospital for alcoholics; that the first psychiatrist to see the possibilities of A. A., and one who had the courage to go to bat for us before his profession, is the staff member of a sanitarium. When such excellent places offer us friendly cooperation we surely ought to return it in kind.

Many sanitariums and private hospitals are necessarily too high priced for the average alcoholic. Public hospitals being too few, asylums and religious institutions too seldom available, the average group has been hard put to find spots where prospective members can be hospitalized a few days at modest expense.

This urgency has tempted some A. A. groups to set up drying out places of their own, hiring A. A. managers, nurses, and securing the services of a visiting physician. Where this has been done under the direct auspices of an A. A. group it has almost always backfired. It has put the group into business, a kind of business about which few A. A.s know anything at all. Too many clashing personalities, too many cooks spoiling the broth, usually bring about the abandonment of such attempts. We have reluctantly been obliged to see that an A. A. group is primarily a spiritual entity; that, as a group the less business it has to transact, the better. While on this theme it ought to be noted that practically all group schemes to finance or guarantee hospital bills for fellow members have failed also. Not only do many such loans go unpaid, there is always the controversial question in the group

as to which prospects deserve them in the first place.

In still other instances A. A. groups, driven by their acute need for medical aid, have started public money raising campaigns to set up "A. A. hospitals" in their communities. These efforts almost invariably come to naught. Not only do these groups intend to go into the hospital business, they intend to finance their ventures by soliciting the public in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous. Instantly all sorts of doubts are generated; the projects bog down. Conservative A. A.s realize that business ventures or solicitations carrying the A. A. endorsement are truly dangerous to us all. Were this practice to become general the lid would be off. Promoters, A. A. and otherwise, would have a field day.

Rest Farms One Solution

This search for reasonably priced and understanding medical treatment has brought into being still another class of facilities. These are rest farms and "drying out" places operated by individual A. A.s under suitable medical supervision. These set-ups have proved far more satisfactory than group directed projects. As might be expected their success is in exact proportion to the managerial ability and good faith of the A. A. in charge. If he is able and conscientious, a very good result is possible; if neither, the place folds up. Not being a group project and not bearing the A. A. name, these ventures can be taken or left alone. The operation of such establishments is always beset with peculiar difficulties. It is difficult for the A. A. manager to charge high enough rates to make the venture include a fair living for himself. If he does, people are apt to say that he is professionalizing, or "making money out of A. A." Nonsense though this may often be, it is a severe handicap nevertheless. Yet, in spite of the headaches encountered, a good number of these farms and sobering-up spots are in active operation and can seemingly continue just as long as they are tactfully managed, do not carry the A. A. name, and do not publicly solicit funds as A. A. enterprises. When a place has an A. A. in charge we sometimes do take thoughtless advantage of the fact. We dump alcoholics into it just to get them off our hands; we promise to pay bills and do not. Any A. A. who can successfully manage one of these "drunk emporiums" ought to be congratulated. It is a hard and often thankless job though it may bring him deep spiritual satisfaction. Perhaps this is the reason so many A. A.s wish to try it!

The question often arises about what to do



“And, Harry, old pal, bring some Sen Sen with you. My wife gets home from work at five o’clock, and I don’t want her to know I’ve been drinking.”

with a severe case when no hospital is available. First of all, we ought, if possible, to call a doctor. We should ascertain for the doctor's benefit how long our man has been drinking and particularly whether he has been taking much sedative. Under no circumstances should we laymen ever administer any sedatives. We must leave, this strictly to the doctor.

Treatment Up to Physician

In some places A. A.s take turns sitting the clock around tapering off a man with a bad hangover. Though this can sometimes be done, the patient will usually insist on tapering himself "up" instead of "off." Now and then we have to adopt the desperate expedient of putting a man in jail, especially if violent. But when absolutely necessary, patience, persuasion, and a doctor's help will generally do the trick — if the patient will really try. If he won't, there is little to do but let him drink on until he has had enough.

Among A. A.s, one hears much discussion

about the merits of the several treatments. Actually, our only concern about physical treatment is that of being satisfied that the physician in charge understands alcoholics.

Two other promising prospects for good and reasonably priced hospitalization are in view. These are the various general hospitals which continue to open their doors to us. Very early in A. A. history Catholic hospitals in a few mid-western cities saw our need and took us in, regardless of denomination. Their example has led other religiously oriented institutions to do likewise, for which we are extremely grateful. Quite recently, other private and semi-private general hospitals have begun to show great interest. Sometimes they go so far as setting apart wards for A. A. use, admitting alcoholics on our recommendation only, giving us generous visiting privileges and very reasonable rates. Arrangements of this sort already functioning have been so satisfactory to both hospitals and A. A. that many such set-ups should soon be active. In these situations we do not participate in hospital management. We are

Hollywood Party Aids Building Fund

Big names were plentiful at the second annual party for the building fund put on by the Central Hollywood Group of Hollywood, Calif.

The first half of the program included a vaudeville show in the theatre, seating 1,000, at the Hollywood Legion Clubhouse. Leon Errol and Charlie Irwin appeared for the second time with Bob Hope, Donald O'Connor, Keenan Wynn, Eddie Garr, Art Wayne, Billie DeWolfe and others.

At 9 o'clock, the voice of Bill, one of the founders, was brought in by wire for a short talk and later the theatre was cleared for dancing while downstairs in the cabaret room, which holds 600, the entertainment continued with games and refreshments.

Although Central Hollywood took the initiative in the building fund, the building will be for all local groups for any A.A. purpose, business or recreational.

* * *

From *The Alanews*, Dubuque, Ia.:

You may be hell bent, but don't insist on company.

It's all right to drink like a fish if you drink, what a fish drinks.

The dizzy feeling some people complain about is hardly ever caused by doing too many good turns.

Some women become nags because their husbands behave like mules.

afforded special privileges in exchange for our cooperation.

Much Aid from Outside

It surely may be said that the future looks bright. Much more hospitalization, based on the certainty that we are a sick people and that plenty can be done about it, is now on the way. We ought gratefully to acknowledge the work of those agencies outside A. A. who are strenuously helping this life-redeeming trend along. State, county, and municipal governments, large universities are agitating our cause. They are being ably seconded by various hospital and other associations. While traditionally A. A. does not ever exert any political or promotional pressure, we can, as individuals, make our great need for sufficient hospitalization known to all who might be interested; emphasizing, of course, that though we believe hospitalization to be primarily a medical problem for communities and physicians to answer, we A. A.s would like to cooperate with them in every possible way.

Our Blessings Prove Real Miracle of A.A.

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isons are not only odious but also very dangerous to me. Too much of this dwelling on the other guy's stupid antics and I may begin subconsciously to enjoy his troubles, to shed crocodile tears and to feel that, by contrast, I'm quite a fine fellow. Worse yet, my faith in A.A. may start to wear a bit thin, and for me a return to doubt and cynicism is a return to whisky. If I must do some comparing, I'd better stack myself up against the huge majority of genuine successes in A.A., the persons I really admire and would like to emulate. This will deflate me, assuredly; but it will also keep me in balance and improve my humility. Or, if I have the nerve, let me compare myself just fleetingly with a man named Jesus Christ—and then let's see where I stand. I think you'll find me standing on my knees.

My blessings, stemming from A.A., are countless; but I'd better count as many as I can, good and loudly, as often as I can. It is a rare privilege and a real joy for me to know and try to follow the example of those who have risen high on the A.A. ladder from very low and sordid circumstances; or to watch and study the eager A.A. baby as he gratefully seizes the program, gains confidence, expands and thrives and progresses. To be sure, I must never, never withhold whatever help I can provide to someone in distress, for giving help is in itself one of our prime blessings. But I know beyond doubt that A.A. is positively successful, while the occasional slipper is a negative influence. For my salvation I'd better keep my eye on the ball.

Cynicism Negative

I have mentioned cynicism. It used to be my besetting sin and it's still an ominous threat. And cynicism is 100 per cent negative, full of such mocking, tongue-in-cheek cracks as "Oh yeah?" and "He's a good guy but—" and "That babe's a smoothie but what's her angle?" If I deliberately set out to show my ingratitude for countless blessings I could scarcely do it more effectively than by questioning the sincerity and the motives of my fellow-A.A.s. I'd jolly well better remember that when I came lurching into this outfit and began kicking things around, I was offered the most superb friendships and the finest tolerance that I have ever known. I desperately needed it all; nothing less would have rescued me. Had a single tiny shaft of barbed criticism or scoffing doubt penetrated my sensitive skin I might have turned away—to fill eventually the space

in Potter's field I had been buying for years. This isn't idle fantasy but cold fact. I never could have believed in myself five years ago without the divinely managed discovery of people so understanding that they first believed in me. This faith, freely given by others, was my initial A.A. blessing and one of the richest. If I am at all capable of gratitude now, I shall convert it into action by passing that blessed understanding along.

Honesty An Individual Problem

I am grateful today for the budding sprouts of honesty in my heart. Already this innovation has given me the clarity of vision to face my many shortcomings, to recognize my direst needs, and to perceive that these don't necessarily have to coincide at any given moment with the other fellow's needs. Let me try to illustrate that. A.A.s are forever saying "Keep it simple," and to that I say amen. God knows I have learned the hard way that the simple way is the easy way. But to a dozen minds simplicity can mean a dozen things. "Keep it simple" doesn't mean "Put your brain to sleep" or "Stop trying to improve yourself." I recently heard a good friend say, "Whisky is my problem, period," and I knew that for him, at that moment, that was simple honesty. For my friend is an honest man. For me to echo the same statement at that moment would be a big lie. Whisky is not a problem to me as of this writing. Oh yes, I have well in mind the basic fact of my disease, that I am just one drink away from drunkenness and disaster. But I also know whether I'll take that first drink by this nightfall. The answer is no.

Honest thinking convinces me that instead of a pressing problem I have certain fundamental needs, currently humility and tolerance, and undoubtedly it is a blessing that I shall always need and have to strive for them. I shudder to think of the sickening thud that would follow were I to wake up tomorrow and decide that I had attained perfection in any virtue. As to tolerance, you and I can plainly hear the world crying for it; but as A.A.s and individuals, how many of us actually view it as a vital ingredient for our personal success? And how many realize that a tolerant altitude is no favor to be condescendingly granted, but is vastly more beneficial to the fellow who adopts it than to the fellow who is being tolerated? I, for one, need tolerance of others so that I may retain sobriety and tolerate myself.

We won't become tolerant, though, until we feel the need of it. Once my bigotry blinded

me to this need, and now the blindfold is off, and for this little step ahead I am thankful. As an early fruit of this blessing I have reached some simple, sharply-defined views on the give-and-take of A.A.; a sort of creed for tolerance which, I hope, will help to guide my A.A. conduct. Here is the creed:

I must have no more wish to impose any idea of mine on others, with any effort to inflict its adoption, than I have of demanding the rocket franchise for the passenger run to Mars. It is helpful to me, or should be, when a suggestion of mine is picked up, honestly considered and taken apart. If it still satisfies, me I may retain it; if it is proven wrong I'll abandon it and be intelligent enough to admit that it was cockeyed.

There's no special privilege in A.A. and no monopoly on truth. I must accord a full, fair and impartial hearing, for instance, to a brother with an honest leaning toward atheism, for that is a grave problem and a cry for help; to one with disturbing doubt as to the Higher Power, for he needs encouragement; to one publicly affirming a simple faith and reliance in God, for that encourages me; even to one who knows all about God and still scoffs, though for him I may offer only pity.

I must remember there is a place and a good use in A.A. for honest differences, but neither a place nor an excuse for pettiness or for needling a man till he bleeds. If I stoop to ill-tempered sarcasm or venom, to questioning others' motives, to deriding their professions of sincerity, I will have forgotten the basic invariable that we are here solely to help ourselves and others, and not to irritate or disturb or confuse.

Tolerance Helps Humility

I must carry this give-and-take further if I am to function with honest tolerance. I must bear in mind that your standard of ethical and moral living is one thing and mine may well be something else, and either or both may be right. The important thing is that each man be true to his own highest standard, and each woman be true to hers. It is not important that we see eye to eye. I know dry A.A.s who for years have gotten away with what looks to me like murder in the first degree. Things I see no harm in doing, and do, may look very black indeed from where you're silling. If we both stay dry and contented—and personally I won't stay dry long if I'm not satisfied with my own conduct—there simply is no conflict.

So that is a creed for A.A. tolerance, offered

for your consideration—though by no means for your compulsory endorsement. It is merely the kind of tolerance that will meet my own standard for myself and help to keep me dry and happy. And I believe I shall benefit by it quite fully if and when my other great need, true humility, is achieved in a rather advanced degree. For humility turns the pointing finger of criticism inward, and if I can see myself with honest eyes, as God Himself must see me, then I will have neither the urge nor the opportunity to heap intolerance on those who also stumble.

I think each of you had to find, and found, a deep humility when you encountered the 1st Step and accepted it. I'm sure each is thankful today for the strength thus gained that opened your door to A.A. happiness. I, too, mustered the grace somewhere to admit the bankruptcy of my will; but in all honesty I'm afraid that early humbleness was a little artificial, a little superimposed. Meekness that is impressed upon us with a blackjack in the hands of old John B. is not too dependable for it's apt to vanish when the bruises heal. This gloomy fact has been demonstrated to me by frequent reversions to arrogance and egotism. My need today is for a humility so firmly rooted inside that it will stick to my ribs during prosperity as well as adversity. I'll be able to report progress, I think, on the day some deluded person tells me I'm brilliant and I'll still know that I'm really touching a new high in mediocrity—and that it's all right because I'm supposed to be mediocre.

Faith Lies Within Self

I've said before and I still believe that enough true humility would solve every problem and dissolve every unsettling influence that might arise in my lifetime. Those who know me as a gent with a badly swollen noggin may be shocked to learn that I dare aspire to possess enough humility, some time in the future, to fill all my needs and keep me contented in my tiny, insignificant assignment on this earth. I hasten to explain that I can and do hold this aspiration only through the soothing grace of a blessing which transcends all others.

I am grateful above all for the blessing that came to me, belatedly but joyously, when cynicism had run its course and I returned to the acceptance and application of the simple faith of my fathers. Of my countless blessings this is the most positive, for out of faith, re-discovered, has stemmed everything good that has happened to me since.

Faith hasn't opened all doors and solved all mysteries but it has made me stop asking a lot of idle, unnecessary questions. I don't yet know why I remained childish through most of my adult life and yet tossed aside my childish faith. But I don't have to know why; it

Men of Extinction

(The second in a series of portraits of men who enjoyed the finer things in life.)



*J. Penrose Calvados,
connoisseur of fine liqueurs and cork-whiffer.*

is enough that I learned through the A.A. philosophy how to regain this healing force. And I want to express my belief right now that unshakable faith will come to any A.A. who will supply an open mind, quite a bit of patience and a willingness to give up the dubious pleasures of sneering skepticism. Ralph Waldo Emerson contended that "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself," and as a paraphrase I suggest that "Nothing can deny you faith but yourself." I think faith comes by a gradual process to those who want it earnestly but have lost or mislaid it, even to those who never had it if they can recognize their need. I first gained faith in certain individuals in A.A.; then in the A.A. philosophy as a whole, and finally I could see that this was also God's philosophy, whereupon I reposed my faith in Him. This was certainly backing into it, and even then I had to have a lot of screwball Jap kamikazes emphasize the point; but that's another story. The truth is that I was using my faith in God long before I acknowledged it; and that leads me to suspect that many of my A.A. friends are relying fully on the Higher Power without having yet gotten around to making an acknowledgment.

Faith, which in our terms is merely the total acceptance and application of the 3rd Step,

clears up so many things in a comforting and satisfying manner. It pays so many immediate dividends. It functions with such quiet efficiency in wrecking our old, phony sense of values and supplying a new, saner one. It offers such a complete answer to our prayer for "serenity to accept things we can't change." Small wonder that I rate it as my No. 1 blessing.

Faith has convinced me that our 12 Steps are divinely inspired. I used to monkey around with them like a kid with a tinker-toy, distorting them all out of shape to conform to my personal desires. Incidentally, during that period of experimentation I was also drinking a lot of whisky. Now I have to accept the Steps of Recovery as they are, and be eternally grateful for them. In my opinion the A.A. who says "I'm fitting the program to my personality" is flirting with a dangerous doctrine; he would be much safer in fitting his personality to the program. We like to kid ourselves that A.A. is free of rules and regulations and restraints; but to me the 12 Steps have become immutable laws, and when I break them I suffer.

Of course, I break them. Being normally human and abnormally susceptible, I probably will break one or more of them every day through my life. But faith breeds a kind of honesty which nowadays rejects an old formula of rationalizing my sins of commission and omission, and of arguing that black is white. I used to say, "This isn't really wrong because it won't hurt anybody but myself and it won't hurt me much." I am surprised and pleased to discover nowadays that when I say, "This is wrong but I'm going to do it anyway," quite often I wind up abandoning the whole silly project.

What If We Can't Drink?

Thank God and A.A.—and in my mind these agencies of my deliverance have blended into spiritual look-alikes—thank God and A.A. that you and I can now view with positive optimism our status as alcoholics. If our faith means anything it means that we now accept this condition without further shrill queries as to the reason for it. This is God's will; and what have we got to crab about anyway? Hasn't God also equipped us with a foolproof roadmap for progress along a path of contentment through self-improvement, a way of atonement through service?

I know that each of you is as happy as I am at the feeling that at last we "belong," that now we have some sort of a place in the scheme of things. When I recall my own dissolute past this takes on certain aspects of the miraculous. It is a place of regained self-respect and of quiet dignity—added, I believe, with the dawn of unselfishness. Of course we are

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No Time on My Hands!

Our Blessings

(Continued from Page 7)

From *While Plains, N. Y.*

Those of you who were early subscribers to *The A.A. Grapevine* perhaps remember a column called "Time on Your Hands," which ran in the first six or seven issues. Though not a columnist, by the stretch of the most elastic imagination, and certainly not an expert in occupational therapy, I had the temerity to write that bit each month. I sent for catalogues, questioned friends and strangers, pored over lists and advertisements in order to collect data—and what happened? I got caught in the toils!

I had been sober about three years when the first *A.A. Grapevine* appeared and had begun to get itchy about myself—but didn't know it. Previous to A.A. I hadn't done much to improve myself or to bring out any latent abilities—even as you and you!

Possibilities Unlimited

My first three years in the group proved to me that I did have at least a modicum of ability—but alas, very little fundamental knowledge to back it up. Going to school never occurred to me. Heavens! I was in my forties and school was for adolescents! That was before I read the catalogues and brochures which poured in by every post and saw the marvelous opportunities offered for adult education—along specialized trade or professional lines or in just pure scholarship. I was fascinated, but in a state of conflict. There was an embarrassment of riches to choose from and I wanted them all—*instantly*. I was going to be a chemist, psychologist, social worker and Greek scholar; I was going to write plays, get in the diplomatic service, design houses and learn Portuguese.

Yes—I'm an alcoholic. But I'm an A.A., too, so the slogan, "First things first," popped into my mind. What *was* the first thing in my life? Why, A.A., of course. What would help me most in my A.A. work? Well, a lot of studios probably would. So there I was with only a few things eliminated. I started again. What, especially, was I doing in A.A. at the moment? Aside from 12th Stepping, I was one of the editors of *The A.A. Grapevine* and, therefore, had to write a little and edit a little, among other things. I was also called upon to speak here and there and the unfortunate situation existed that I was terrified both of speaking and of writing. Kind friends told me that I didn't show my fright, but I felt it and deep down inside of me was a horrible feeling of unsureness.

Well, thought I, maybe if I study writing and

speaking I'll overcome my fears—just like that! This, at least narrowed me down to two subjects and I discovered that my approach and my point of view had changed. I no longer wanted to be a *great* or a *famous* anything. I just wanted to be a more adequate A.A. I looked up courses that appealed to me in these two subjects, not to become a great orator or a famous writer, but to be able to do my A.A. jobs a little bit better and with more assurance.

About this time I realized that I was many moons away from my school days and had forgotten, during my befuddled years, much of the basic knowledge which I had learned, way back then. My first courses had to be decidedly elementary—but I loved them. They were the intellectual stimuli I needed to get over my itch. My brain, long inactive, started, slowly and painfully, to wake up.

That was three years ago. Since then, I have gone on to study some of the more challenging and exciting things, but, always, with the thought, first, will this help me to be a more useful A.A.?

I am sure that there comes a time, in our process of growing up, when we all think about our wasted days. We realize that life is slipping on—and where are we? It isn't that A.A. is not enough. It's that A.A. thinking awakens ambitions, long dormant, and we feel frustrated because we believe that it is too late to do anything about it. It isn't! Take it from Grandma Lois! I *have* done something about it and I never have had so much fun! What if you do feel that school is for adolescents? Isn't that what we learn we are — we alcoholics?

Programs Offered Widely

A stimulating and varied adult education program is offered in almost every city, town and hamlet in America if you want to look for it. You can learn how to weave baskets or you can study law. The possibilities, especially in the universities, colleges and trade schools, are practically unlimited.

There is only one word of warning that I would like to give. Don't get started if you can't go whole hog! When that sleepy brain gets through yawning and stretching, it finds that it is ravenously hungry after its long hibernation. It nudges you and pushes you and whines and howls to be fed—and, paradoxically the more you feed it the more insatiable becomes its appetite.—*Lois K.*

* * *

Put yourself to as much trouble as you do your friends!

grateful for material things like economic security, but these we can safely take for granted, knowing that any fool can make more money sober than drunk. But measured by our new scale of values, the early stirring within us of altruism is really something. We are able, now, fully to understand what Thomas a Kempis was driving at when he wrote: "Know thou that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world." Man, how a drinking alky loves himself—and hurls himself—and doesn't know it till he sobers up and joins A.A.! Now we read with genuine gladness that part of our doctor's prescription which directs us to go out and lend a hand to some other drunk. That's a break comparable to meeting a doctor in the old days who'd tell us, "What you need is good, nutritious whisky and plenty of it." How often have we whispered to ourselves, "If I could only make up somehow for all those wasted, barren years." Well, now the chance is here, tailor-made for our use, and it's a finer and better-defined plan for service than is given to any non-alcoholics I know.

We'd better not sidestep the obligation and the responsibility entrusted to us. In all fairness, I don't see any inclination to do any sidestepping. Instead I see an eagerness in everybody to dig into the 12th Step, to "carry that old mail and don't spare the horses." Surely you'll agree that's a miracle, a spirit like this showing up in a class of people formerly 100 per cent introverted and egocentric. I think it's a result of positive thinking and acting, reliance on the wisdom of the Higher Power, and an indescribable sense of gratitude.

I said at the outset that my blessings were countless and I have certainly proven that point. It occurs to me at this windup stage that I haven't even listed sobriety, a blessing which affords the real beginning of life for me and for every other alcoholic. So many blessings remain unmentioned, but after all I only hoped to remind myself and you of the infinite riches, far beyond the mere essential of sobriety, that lie within our grasp if we simply follow the A.A. way of living. And I'll lay anybody ten to one right now that if and when you sit down to itemize your positive blessings, the list will begin—not with material things like a bigger income or social prestige—but with spiritual intangibles like increased faith, humility, tolerance and opportunities for atonement through service. All of which are mighty strides toward our real goal, The peace of mind we all dream about.—*E.B.*

A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

S.R.O. for A.A.—Police and firemen were needed to turn away over 300 while 700 enthusiastic A.A.s and friends crowded into Brown Hall in Boston recently when the Central Service Committee there sponsored the largest meeting ever held in the area. M.M. of New York was the speaker. She also addressed the New England Hospital Association and the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism as well as a local professional group and several citizens' groups. Newspapers gave A.A. a great deal of fine publicity as the result of these efforts. The report from Boston says there are now more groups functioning under the Boston Central Service Committee than there were members in the Boston Group in March, 1942.

Austin gets Club—Austin, Texas, A.A.s report that a six-room house at 405 West 18th Street has been rented for clubhouse quarters. Partitions have been removed in order to provide space for holding meetings on Tuesday and Friday nights and Sunday afternoons. Out of town visitors are invited to pay visits.

"Doubles" Record Claimed—The Indian Village Group of Detroit announces that out of a membership of 55 there are seven married couples who are active members. They're inclined to believe that this might be some sort of record, and would like to know if it is.

Radio Programs in Baltimore—The Central Baltimore, Md., Group now has four meetings a week in the clubhouse at 857 North Eutaw Street. Monday at 8:30 there is a meeting for alcoholics and their immediate families; Wednesday an open meeting and Friday evening, also at the same time a closed meeting of the discussion type. Sunday at 3:30 there is a beginners' meeting which new members are asked to attend for four consecutive Sundays. An older member reviews the 12 Steps with longer discussions of three of them. Besides these meetings there are neighborhood discussion groups at North Baltimore Friday evenings, East Baltimore on Tuesday evenings and the Valley, Monday evenings. The Towson Group meets three times each week, Tuesday and Friday at 8:30 and Sunday from 3 to 5. Since last September the Central Group has had a 15-minute spot on Station WITH on alternate Sundays with a script written and staged by A.A.s. The Towson Group broadcasts every Saturday over WFBR at 7:15. A.A. members answer questions for 15 minutes without a script. Response is reported good.

Invitation to Breakfast—Visitors are invited to attend the 9 A.M. Sunday breakfast of the

Indianapolis A.A. Groups held in the St. Clair Room of the Antlers Hotel. A change was made recently to this more spacious meeting place which offers a fancier breakfast and a two-story ceiling for the better accommodation of the tobacco addicts.

Growing Up Fast—Last month the Wallkill, N. Y. Prison Group celebrated its second anniversary with more than 50 members as compared to the handful who began the work. This is an inmate group, first of its kind to become active in the State Department of Correction which includes all prisons and reformatories. Members have expressed their thanks for the interest of the warden, Dr. Walter M. Wallack and his sponsoring committee as well as the visitors from outside groups, many of whom have conducted meetings. The Wallkill Group is proud of the fact that 70 percent of A. A. members leaving the institution have become active outside and are making good records. "We are happy to know that on leaving here we will be welcomed into A. A. groups on the outside. With this knowledge we can face the future unafraid," the report concludes.

Six Year Olds—Open house was held in Kansas City, Mo., to celebrate the sixth A.A. anniversary there. Visitors were present from Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, Arkansas, Illinois and many other states. The tenth member of A.A., from New York, and the founder of the Chicago Group were principal speakers. A buffet supper and refreshments at the open house helped to make it a real party. Another sixth anniversary was observed recently at Kent, Ohio, when 160 heard Dr. L. of Dover as leader for the event. In the foreign language department, the Sunset Norwegian Group was organized a year ago last month with the aim of helping Norwegian sailors in New York, many of whom, it was felt, would feel more at home in a closed session of a Norwegian group. First meetings were used to train the charter members to speak A.A. in Norwegian and to translate the 12 Steps into that language. The 12 Steps and an explanation of A.A. have been printed in Norwegian and copies have been sent to the Alcoholic Foundation while others have been mailed to friends in Norway. This group meets Thursdays in the Norwegian Seamen's House, 62 Hansen Place, Brooklyn, N. Y., with the first open meeting held in March. The anniversary was celebrated in the assembly hall of the Seamen's House with an open session in English. Marshalltown, Ia., had plenty of visitors for the third anniversary April 26 with a dinner at the Tall Corn Hotel. Father Dowling

of St. Louis was the speaker. Down in Tuscaloosa, Ala., some 40 ex-problem drinkers who used to pride themselves on drinking like Southern gentlemen marked completion of their first six months in A.A. recently. Two of the founders were patients in the Veterans Hospital nearby and talked over the idea of starting a fellowship in town. Members of the Birmingham Group helped and home meetings started, with a later transfer to the courthouse where they are now held Wednesday and Saturday evenings. One of the Tuscaloosa pioneers recently uncovered a paper written in 1936 in which he had drawn a striking similarity to the first seven Steps, but had not talked it over with another alcoholic and went through ten more alcoholic years before he found the complete program.

Saginaw Records Saga—A two-page history of A. A. in Saginaw, Mich., written by Bill M. for the second anniversary, tells of growth from 12 to 60 members. The start came when an A. A. came to town after affiliation in Des Moines and Omaha and met a Saginaw member who had been attending Bay City meetings. They found two more and started home meetings, put an ad in the paper and continued to grow until they moved to the Y.M.C.A. About a year ago the group blossomed out in the present quarters at the Metropolitan Club with open meetings, continuing closed sessions at the "Y". A coming-out party, active support by *The Saginaw News* and townspeople aided in further growth with the renting of clubrooms at Genesee and Washington while retaining the Metropolitan headquarters. The group finally has ended up with the Metropolitan Club as the permanent headquarters.

Groups Serve Special Interests—San Diego, Calif., reports three groups operating with real success. The Alcoholic Women's Group has held regular meetings for over a year and has grown from four to over 70 members with 23 with more than a year of sobriety. The Non-Alcoholic Group started about the same time, meeting twice a month on the same night as the Alcoholic Women in the same building, after which the two groups get together for coffee and doughnuts. This group has had considerable success in achieving better understanding and filling social needs of alcoholics. The Young Men's group is composed entirely of men under 40 and has grown so fast that it will soon become two groups or the age limit will be lowered. In this activity San Diego members feel they have found a solution as to how the "old goats" can help the

(Continued on next page)

younger people in spite of the difference in outlook of the two generations. These groups, meeting in closed session, are supplemented by an open meeting for all interested. A central office with a full-time secretary is open five and a half days a week. A central committee for A.A. public group relations and a management committee to look after the office and business complete the San Diego picture.

New Chairman Every Three Months—In an outline of activities Ben B., secretary of the Jersey City, N. J. Group says that this organization elects a new chairman every three months, who with the secretary, books all meetings both at home and away during the period. Jersey City has an average attendance of 125 to 150 at the Friday night sessions, having started three and one-half years ago with two. Two other groups, Union City and Jersey City Heights, have been formed partially from the original group which has continued to grow in spite of these losses. In conjunction with the regular meetings the group conducts two meetings each week at the Medical Center's Psychopathic Ward with a "graduate" of the ward and secretary and results have led to quips that "A.A. may put them out of business." Anniversaries are observed with presentation of pins after three months and group celebrations of a year the last Friday of the month. An agreement has been established between the Round Top Group of Providence, R. I., and officials of the Charles V. Chapin Hospital in Providence designed to supplement the physical treatment of alcoholics with the group therapy of A.A. Several beds will be made available for treatment of individuals recommended by the local A.A. group which will hold meetings from time to time at the hospital. These meetings were requested by the authorities. Previously only alcoholics committed by local authorities were accepted. There will be no obligation on the patients' part to attend meetings. Waverly and New Hampton Groups in Iowa held a joint meeting recently with visitors from Tripoli, Osage, Allison, Clarksville and Waterloo.

The Doctor Calls—A.A.s in Columbia, S. C., are still glowing over a visit by Doctor R. S., one of the founders of A.A., and his wife who dropped in on their return from a Florida vacation. Dr. and Mrs. S. visited the newly opened club rooms and joined in a general conversation which lasted several hours and during which members learned, as the result of many questions, of the start of A.A., and absorbed a lot more knowledge of how it works.

Plans and Ideas—The Control Board of the Central Baltimore A.A. Group has asked each group to ask a member to report to *The A.A. Grapevine* each month. All members in the Tacoma, Wash., Group are "in the chips," carry-

ing them in their pockets and purses instead of on the shoulder. A white chip given at the first meeting is exchanged for a yellow one after 60 days; the yellow for a red at the end of three months and the red for a blue at the end of a year of sobriety. At present Tacoma has four blue chip members with one holding three blues while over half have one or more red chips. These chips are felt to signify and symbolize an honest effort to live the A.A. program. Although founded only in January 1947 the members of the Tyler, Texas, Group have prepared a booklet entitled *Slaves of Drink Find Peace of Mind*. In addition to explanations of the A.A. program the booklet includes discussions of alcoholism as a public health problem, questions to determine whether the reader is an alcoholic and how to make A.A. work. Hamilton, Bermuda, A.A.s report a visit from Carla P. of the Manhattan Group who gave first-hand information on the Central Office, as

NEW GROUPS REGISTERED

ARKANSAS—Pine Bluff (Group No. 2).
 CALIFORNIA—Avalon (Catalina Island Group); Burbank (Women's Group); Hollywood (Hollywood Night Workers Group); San Francisco (Richmond Group); San Luis Obispo.
 FLORIDA—Marianna.
 INDIANA—Indiana State Prison.
 IOWA—West Liberty.
 KENTUCKY—Bowling Green.
 MARYLAND — Baltimore (North Baltimore Group).
 MASSACHUSETTS—Boston (South End Group); Lowell.
 MICHIGAN—Detroit (Mack Avenue Group).
 MINNESOTA—Madelia; Worthington.
 MISSISSIPPI—Pascagoula.
 MISSOURI—Carthage; Eugene.
 NEW JERSEY—Teaneck.
 NEW MEXICO—Tucumcari.
 NEW YORK — Attica (Attica State Prison Group); Black River; Bronx (Washington Heights Group).
 NORTH CAROLINA—Albemarle; Leaksville; New River.
 OHIO—Jackson; Lakewood (Madison Lakewood Group); Rocky River.
 PENNSYLVANIA — Altoona; Erie (East Side Group).
 RHODE ISLAND—Westerly.
 SOUTH DAKOTA—Artisan.
 TENNESSEE—McMinnville.
 TEXAS—Shamrock.
 VIRGINIA—Lynchburg (Negro Group).
 WISCONSIN—Shawons.
 AUSTRALIA—Sydney.
 CANADA—Kelowna, B. C.; Winnipeg, Man.; (Assinaboine Group).

well as a visit and talk from Rita S. of The Boston Group. Bill P. of Cape Cod and Horace B. of Manhattan are reported attending regular Wednesday meetings in Bermuda. A large bulletin board with group news, items and letters of interest is used by the Passaic, N. J., Group to save time usually taken up with meeting announcements. Passaic held a spring party during which 90 members enjoyed entertainment and refreshments.

Empty Jug Discontinued—Because of the death of its editor, *The Empty Jug*, publication of the Chattanooga Group has been suspended. However, if those who had subscribed wish the publication continued, they are asked to write to the secretary, P.O. Box 905, Chattanooga 1, Tenn.

New Groups Reported—A good crop of new groups is springing up in various sections of the country according to reports to *The A. A. Grapevine*. Bay Pines Veterans Group at Bay Pines Hospital, near Strasbourg, Fla., got underway with the help of several members from St. Petersburg and with speakers from New Jersey and Long Island. Clearwater and Tampa Groups are also expected to be of much help. Five members at Carroll, Ia. have selected Monday as their meeting night after a send-off meeting by groups from Ft. Dodge and Pocahontas. The local paper carried an account which was extremely helpful. A new venture at Butte, Mont, is the organization of a group at the state hospital at Warm Springs with 18 to 20 patients reported at each meeting. Butte members have been attending and Dr. G. V. Holmes has taken a great interest in the project. An article in the hospital paper, *Steam*, recommends the A.A. program. Butte members urge visitors to drop in at their place or visit the new group. Meetings are at 8 o'clock Wednesday. Easton, Penn., also reports a new group formed within the past few weeks. About 80 Northern Iowa members and friends helped the Algona Group get its start. Pocahontas, Estherville, Spencer, Britt, Kanawha, Fonda, Emmetsburg, Livermore, Linn Grove, Spirit Lake, Sioux Rapids, Laurens, Havelock, Humboldt and Ft. Dodge were all represented at Algona. Organized only a few weeks ago the Newport, R.I., Group has more than a dozen members and has meetings every Tuesday night at the Rochambeau House.

Along the Grapevine—Members of the Atlanta, Ga., North Avenue Group recently enjoyed a visit to the daffodil gardens of Joel Chandler Harris, Jr. Son of the creator of the immortal "Uncle Remus" and inheritor of his wit, Mr. Harris has spoken twice to the group and although a non-alcoholic has attended several open meetings. Within the past six months this group has grown over 100 percent. In a town
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Mail Call for All A. A.s at Home or Abroad

Letters to this department are invited on any subject pertinent to A.A. Due to space limitations you are asked to hold your letters to a maximum of 350 words.

Only initials will be published unless the writer authorizes use of his first name as identification for A.A. friends.

The *A.A. Grapevine* will not divulge the full name of any writer but will forward A.A. communications addressed to the writers of letters published here.—The Editors

Happiness in A.A.

Montclair, N. J.

Some time ago a non-alcoholic who attended one of our meetings with a member of her family, said to me, "I don't see how you can all be so jolly, because the whole thing seems like a nightmare to me." (This is the sort of outsider remark which calls for all my newfound tolerance.) But in thinking this over, it seems to me, as an alcoholic and A.A., that this statement is so far from right, as to be a complete mis-statement. Let me tell you why, as I feel deeply about this.

First, in my opinion, the word "jolly" doesn't fit. Rather, I would say, we are happy. We like to laugh, and do seem to find every excuse to do so. We've been unhappy for so long—maybe that is why. But further than that, we have an inner happiness that comes from release from fear, that comes with that first blessed understanding of what peace of mind can mean.

We have heard so much about the happiness that comes from giving—rather than getting—from doing unto others instead of waiting and expecting others to do for us. We, as A.A. members, have found that special kind of happiness, too. For example, look about, during a meeting, at the faces of the listeners when a new member is giving a first talk of the gratitude he feels and the joy that has come his way. These happy listening friends who have helped show the way, have received far more than they gave.

Finally, we have received happiness that comes from a re-valuation of what is important to us, in our daily lives. Health rather than wealth, or material possessions; the love of those we love and the respect of those we respect; the practice of loving our neighbor and being thoughtful and considerate of him and his opinions. Not what happens to us, but with what courage and honesty we face these problems—these things are important to us now. Gone are the nagging small worries and resentments and hurts that made us so miserable in the past. Oh, yes, there is happiness and plenty of it in an A.A. group.

And this nightmare spoken of by the visitor,

what of that? There was a nightmare, surely, but it is behind us. We are awake now. When as a little girl, my mother would waken me from an occasional frightening dream, I can remember the comfort and reassurance I felt that she was there. I was free from harm and safe in my own room, in my own bed, and my mother would never leave me. That, to me, is the sort of feeling we have when we find A. A. The nightmare is dissolved. We are safe and are not deserted, and we have found the comfort and reassurance that our Heavenly Father is here. We have established contact with a Higher Power and we are no longer afraid.

Is it any wonder we are a happy people—we alcoholics in A. A.?—*B. W.*

Just What I Needed

From Chicago

It takes a pretty hard blow to bring most of us around to thinking about our drinking problem. In my case I was started for A.A. by a knock on the head that left me unconscious.

I was drunk in the apartment of a friend in Greenwich Village when my heart must have slipped a cog and I went down on my forehead cutting off a piece of skin and causing quite a flow of blood. My friend was frightened into thinking I was at the point of death, telephoned Bellevue. Correct diagnosis was soon made and I regained consciousness in the alcoholic ward.

It seems rather strange to me now, but at the time I did not see any inconsistency in hearing about A.A. from my fellow patients in psycho. They were great boosters for A.A. and assured me that my problem was a good as solved. I had someone write down the address of the old 24th Street club. A deterioration of memory had already set in, in my case, and I did not trust myself to find the way without a written address.

As soon as I was discharged I headed for the club rooms. On the way I continued an argument that I was developing for the membership committee. I took it for granted there must be such a committee and they would have to be convinced that I was a real dyed-in-the-wool alcoholic or I would never be permitted to take the treatment. On that bus going over on 23rd Street I really tore myself to pieces. I'm sure I built up an argument based on pure logic that beat anything I have ever done before or since. Evidence from my twenty-eight years of drinking was easy to convince even the most thick-headed of the committee that I was a hardened case. When I finally walked into the club I was really cut to size. I had almost convinced myself that I was hopeless.

Of course there was no committee and I was

readily accepted on my Bellevue record. I didn't want money, although I had very little. If I had been up to any of those old panhandling tricks of mine, a drink would surely have been around the corner. As it was I only wanted to know how I could put an end to my drunken way of life.

It had been an old cry of mine that no one had confidence in me. As a result of course, I had no confidence in myself. At once I caught the spirit of the club. Every member had confidence in me, had confidence that I had solved my drinking problem. It was a lift I needed badly and I began to find calm in the idea that it was truly so.

The 24-hour plan was easy for me. I was asked if I could keep away from a drink for the balance of that first day. I was quick to assure the secretary that I could. Promises were not easy for me. I had broken my word so many times that I felt that only the simplest pledge could be kept. This one fell in that category. It touched and hurt such little pride as I had left. Of course I could stay dry the rest of the day.

In that case, I was counselled, I was to try the program again the next day if I liked it. The day-at-a-time way of getting A.A. was introduced that day into my life and now those days total over two years in sober happy living.

As I look at it now that bump certainly must have knocked some sense into my head that started me thinking for the first time in my life that I was an alcoholic and to prove that my life had become unmanageable.—*D.O'N.*

THE CLIP SHEET

Excerpts from the Public Press

Birmingham, Ala., *News*: "To The Editor of The News: 'With reference to the efforts of some unauthorized persons to obtain funds for Alcoholics Anonymous from the state, let me say that A.A.'s program is worked out entirely by A.A.s themselves and neither accepts or needs financial help from outside. We do not care to become a political football, as several organizations which have attempted to help the afflicted have become. While we do not question the sincerity of those seeking aid for A.A. from the state, we think that it is ill-advised. All we ask is the moral support of our friends and the divine guidance of the Great Spirit.'"

Detroit, Mich., *Free Press*: "A fine step in practical rehabilitation has been taken by Alcoholics Anonymous who are holding regular Sunday meetings at the House of Correction.

(Continued on next page)

They started the meetings for men only, now plan another series for women. From 40 to 50 inmates attend. A.A. hopes to break the circle of a stay in the House, return to Skid Row, and back to the House again."

Franklin, Ind., *Star*: "Dr. Howard W. Stone, in a letter to the editor, says: 'Alcoholics Anonymous has invaded Franklin. I was a guest at their first meeting in our town.' Leaving the meeting with a feeling that something important had come to Franklin, Dr. Stone says: 'Let us analyze A.A. Why has it helped so many thousands to recover? First, there is spiritual therapy. Second, there is group therapy. Third, there is service therapy. The alcoholic invokes the power of God to aid him in his illness. Next, he is with a group of similar individuals who are fighting the same hard battle. And, finally, each A.A. is a missionary. He will go out at any time of the day or night to carry his story to another sick alcoholic. No one can talk to another alcoholic with such sympathetic understanding as a fellow alcoholic.'"

Washington, D. C., *Star*: "Judge Walter J. Casey of the Municipal Court, in an article entitled, 'A Judge's View of Alcoholism,' says: 'We have insisted upon treating the alcoholic as a criminal, and we have subjected him to penalties as severe as those imposed upon offenders whose acts are vicious in character and antisocial in nature—deliberate law breakers. If the alcoholic is a sick person, as I believe him to be, common sense dictates that his restoration to health should be the responsibility of those who, by training and experience, are equipped to handle the problem from the time it is placed in their hands. Therapies have been devised through years of study and patient experimentation which today are considered sound by recognized authorities

in this field. Punitive measures are being discarded and the workhouse and jails abandoned as corrective institutions in the handling of the problem.' "

Southington, Conn., *News and Cheshire*: "Bob, who describes himself as not only a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge but of the Battle of the Bottle, told his story on the Monday night broadcast over WTIC. Bob said he was stationed two years in an overseas station where no liquor was available. After that length of time, he figured, he could drink again like a gentleman—without trouble. But he was mistaken and his troubles with alcohol began all over again, he joined A.A. and found peace. 'Nobody wins the Battle of the Bottle,' said Bob, 'at least, no alcoholic. Our only hope for victory is first to admit defeat. Then, in the skirmishes following, we stand a chance of survival on a 24-hour basis.' "

News Circuit

(Continued from Page 10)

of 1,800 the Cambridge, Minn., Group has 18 active members, its own club room and a lot of prospective new members which leads A.A.s there to wonder if they don't have a "per capita" record, especially in a dry county. Much of the progress is attributed to the Minneapolis Group, 45 miles away. Members from the latter have been active with the Cambridge Group since its start a little over a year ago. The fourth A.A. minstrel show was given by Cleveland A.A.s at the Little Theater with both recent performances sold out. At our press time a city A.A. bowling championship was getting under way in Cleveland as another activity.

On other Pages—"What A.A. Has Done for Me" is the title of an article in the *Anahgram*, monthly publication of Anah Temple A.A. O.N. M.S. of Bangor, Me., in which a prominent Anah noble says he is glad to tell his brother Shriners how A.A. helped him. *The Mid-Ocean Times* of Hamilton, Bermuda, continues to give considerable space to A.A. with such articles as "New Way of Life for Alcoholics Based on 12 Steps," "A.A. Member Sums Up Aims of Growing Organization" and "A.A. Member Makes Community-Wide Appeal on Dangers of Alcoholism," all by members and another, "Wife of Former Alcoholic Reviews Benefits Gained by A.A. Membership." A combination column of news, favorable editorial comment and feature material was put together by the Maryville, Mo., *Forum*, praising A.A. activities in that community. Northern New Jersey papers are contributing much favorable space to A.A. The Fair Lawn-Radburn *News* has an editor's note together with contents of a letter sent by *The A.A. Grapevine* correspondent; The Paterson *Morning Call* has

an article by a staff writer who has a regular assignment to cover A.A. there. A series has been stalled in The Boonton *Times-Bulletin*. They are prepared by a member of the Passaic Group who is an employee of the paper. The Passaic *Herald-News* has run a number of good articles prepared by a specially assigned staff reporter. Under the headline "24 in 'Exclusive Club'," there is a lengthy article in a recent issue of *The Pantagraph* of Bloomington, Ill., while the Columbus, Ohio, *Dispatch* carries a two-column picture with the headline "Lawyers Hear 'Mr. Anonymous'." The story tells of this lawyer's experiences before finding A.A. His face is blocked out in the picture. *The Post* of Cincinnati, Ohio, in the column "Cincinnatus" says in its headline "Being the Story of Joe, the Alcoholic Anonymous, Who Calls to Report 450th Day." The column is an account of Joe, newspaperman, and his gratitude and satisfaction at being an A.A.

New Publications—*The A.A. Beacon*, bearing the picture of a lighthouse and the question "Are you on the beam?" has been started by the Beacon Mill Group, Victoria, B. C., Canada. The first issue spells out "Sobriety" with a thought for each letter and its well-edited material includes news of hospitalization, visits to other groups, correspondence, radio news and a back page map showing locations of groups and members. The second issue reports participation in a delegation which presented an appeal to the government for a sustained educational program, provision for hospital facilities for alcoholics, and appointment of a commission including A.A.s. The delegation reported receiving a sympathetic hearing by all members of the cabinet. As a personal project and form of 12th Step work a Rye, N. Y., member has begun *Dee Dea See's Scrapbook* which will pass along ideas he collects to the members there. *An Introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous* has also been prepared by the Rye Group, which includes members from the Rye, Harrison, Mamaroneck and Larchmont communities, containing a concise, complete outline, along with full information on meetings, address and phone number.

Texans Have Parties—In the spirit of traditional hospitality two Texas groups recently entertained members and friends. Tyler A.A.s were hosts to about 200 members and friends at a buffet supper and open meeting with speakers from Longview and Dallas. A.A.s from Palestine, Lufkin, Waco, Longview, Nacogdoches, Center, Austin and Dallas helped make it a big occasion, in honor of the second month of affiliation with A.A. Between 100 and 125 A.A.s from other parts of Texas and New Mexico attended an open meeting and barbecue at San Angelo.

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