



VOL. IV, NO. 1, JUNE, 1947. P. O. BOX 328, GRAND CENTRAL ANNEX, NEW YORK 17. YEARLY, \$2.50; COPY, 25c

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.

Contents of this publication copyrighted, 1947, by A.A. Grapevine Inc. with all rights reserved. Yearly subscription \$2.50 (\$3 outside the United States) ; single copy 25 cents.

SEDATIVES EASY, AND DEADLY, TOO

(The author of the following article is both an M.D. and an A.A., and thus writes with the conviction of both professional and personal observation. — Ed.)

From Victoria, B. C.

AN article in a lay publication, warning against the use of sedatives in acute intoxication, may seem rather superfluous. The law states that no one may give narcotics, sedatives or hypnotics, except on a doctor's orders; therefore sedatives should present no problem to the A.A. member doing 12th Step work. In spite of the law, however, it is surprising the number of A.A.s who think nothing of giving their prospect, or patient, one or the other of the barbiturates, when they think it necessary.

As A.A. members increase their period of sobriety, increase their A.A. reading, and increase their 12th Step work, their knowledge of alcoholism cannot help but increase. What some forget, however, is that an increasing knowledge of the disease does not mean an increasing knowledge of its treatment—except its A.A. treatment.

Some years ago Dr. Foster Kennedy, in discussing an address given by Bill to a group of medical men (reprinted in *Medicine. Looks at Alcoholics Anonymous*), stated, "I have no doubt that a man who has cured himself of the lust for alcohol has a far greater power for curing alcoholism than has a doctor who has never been afflicted with the same curse." That this statement is true, no one who has been in A.A. for any time, or who has any knowledge of the spread of A.A. during the past 12 years, can doubt. But when Dr. Kennedy spoke of "alcoholism" he was actually referring to "alcohol addiction", the illness that has as its main symptom compulsive drinking. It is the compulsive

drinking that the A.A. "12th Stepper" is treating, or rather, showing the patient how to treat himself.

"Alcoholism" includes many more problems than just "alcohol addiction." One of these problems is acute alcoholic intoxication, in other words—a "drunk." This particular phase of alcoholism often faces us during our 12th Step work; and it will usually tax our tolerance,

patience, understanding and ingenuity if we are to handle it properly. This is especially so when the patient, his family, or both, flatly refuse to have a doctor called in; and this often happens.

Regardless of how much knowledge, or experience we may have in A.A., we must never forget the fact that, while we may be arrested

(Continued on Page 4)

JUNEAU, ALASKA, AMONG NEW GROUPS

New groups which registered with the Central office during April are as follows:

CALIFORNIA—Burlingame; Del Paso Heights; Los Angeles 20-50 Group; Downtown Group, Golden Gate Group, Mission Dolores Group, North Beach No. 34 Group, all of San Francisco; Wilmington.

COLORADO—Denver (Home Group No. 5); Fort Collins.

CONNECTICUT—Darien.

DELAWARE—Laurel; Lewes (Lewes-Rehoboth Beach Groups).

FLORIDA—Deland; Eau Galli.

GEORGIA—Albany, Thomaston.

ILLINOIS—Charleston.

INDIANA—Brownsburg (Speedway Group).

IOWA—Algona, Waterloo (Brighter Side Group).

LOUISIANA—Shreveport (Caddo Group).

MASSACHUSETTS—Winchester.

MICHIGAN—Brown City; Jackson (Cameron Group); Niles; Sault Ste. Marie.

NEW JERSEY—West Orange.

NEW MEXICO—La Luz.

NEW YORK—Bayshore, L. I.; Meyer Memorial Hospital Group, Thursday Morning Group,

Broadway-Filmore Group, all of Buffalo; East Rochester (Fairport and East Rochester Area Group); Little Neck-Douglaston Group; Kings Park State Hospital Group; Liberty-Sullivan County Group; 35 and Under Group, New York City; Ossining; Pulaski; Webster. NORTH CAROLINA—Durham; Lumberton; Raleigh; Southern Pines.

OHIO—Akron (Howard Street Group); Bellefontaine; Cambridge; Cleveland (Edgelake Group); Millersburg; Newark; Youngstown (Argonne Group of the Salvation Army).

OKLAHOMA—Holdenville; Stillwater.

PENNSYLVANIA—Erie (Roosevelt Women's Group).

SOUTH DAKOTA—Rapid City (Group No. 1).

TEXAS—Center (Center Section Group); Denison; Harlingen; Houston (Group No. 2); Victoria.

UTAH—Logan.

VERMONT—Bethel.

WEST VIRGINIA—Williamson.

WISCONSIN—Osseo; Sparta.

ALASKA—Juneau.

CANADA—Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Guelph, Ontario; Montreal D-R Group.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share, their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in *The 12 Steps*. The A.A. book of experience, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and other literature, including *The 12 Points of Tradition*, are available through any group or the Central Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

EDITORIAL:

On the 8th Step

"Made a list of all persons we have harmed and became willing to make amends to them all."

Here the program demonstrates its reality, its understanding of the nature of the alcoholic. How often have we come out of the fog to find the path strewn with persons we have injured or wronged? How often have we stayed awake at night thinking of the wife or mother or sister who suffered far more than we did on our last drunk?

Remember the kindly grocer who cashed our bum checks? Remember the look of anguish on the face of the boss when he had to tell us we were fired? Remember the guy's in the company we let down when our part of the work was neglected? Of course we do. But, more importantly, the A.A. program remembers and understands.

The 8th Step was written for us when we remembered these things. "Make a list," it says. "Be willing to make amends to them all." In other words, stop being remorseful and do something about it.

The part about making a list is easy. Depending on our history, we make either a long or a short list. But the part about making amends is tough. That part takes courage and humility. A man we know made a list of 43 former employers he had harmed, wrote a letter to each, and—fearing the consequences—left town for two weeks! When he arrived back in town, there were 43 answers. Every employer took time out to thank the man for his letter and to wish him luck!

Many A.A.s find it impossible to make full restitution to all persons. That's not essential if you have *been willing to make amends*. Sometimes, a trip across town to a person you have harmed is enough. Most people are happier to see you sober than you think. It's human nature to root for the horse that's behind in the race. It makes people feel good when you show enough courage to come up to them and tell them you are sorry.

Making a list of things you did wrong is a good idea anyway. Just to look at the foolish and terrible things we do gives us pause to think. If we go further and try—we mean *really* try—to do something about them, we get a far greater satisfaction than we deserve. The 8th Step is close to the 4th Step. It's practical and simple. If you found in the 4th Step that you were selfish, look at your list from the 8th Step and see who you harmed through selfishness. Then *do something about it!*

The 8th Step convinces us that A.A. is a program of action. If you think it was hard to admit you were an alcoholic, see how you feel when you go to the people you have been avoiding to tell them you are sorry. That's really hard.

And yet, we cannot describe the wonderful satisfaction that comes if you go through with it. Even the air seems cleaner. Yes, the 8th Step is a lulu, but it pays off at the welcome rate of about 100 to one.

One In A Million In All London

Strange and wonderful stories have been told of the things that happen to A.A.s throughout the world. Usually, they involve curious coincidences, odd events, out-of-the-ordinary experiences. From London comes another which may be classified as coincidence, luck or something more remarkable.

An A.A., who has had indifferent success with the program for five years, arrived in Paris on a business trip, accompanied by his wife. The temptations of the city were great; his faith was small. Soon he was drunk.

The man disappeared for three days. The wife, accustomed to the drinking pattern of her husband, assumed that he could not make the boat train for London as planned. She decided not to take the train but to wait at her hotel in Paris.

However, on the day planned for the trip to London, the man awakened on the boat train. Ruffled, shaky and unshaven, he pulled himself out of a seat to see the fast-moving countryside in the window. A hurried examination disclosed that (1) he had no money and (2) no passport. His watch was missing.

Alone in London

On arrival in England, he convinced the authorities of his ability to obtain his passport by airmail and was admitted to the country. Eventually, he arrived at a large hotel in London.

After rearranging his clothing as best he could, he took a seat in the lounge to ponder his desperate situation, he had no personal friends in London, he was broke. All of his valuables were missing, he was tired and nervous and, by God, he needed a drink.

Glancing at the large clock in the hotel, the man found he was so foggy he couldn't read it, and neither did he know the date. He saw a well dressed Englishman seated on a divan and asked him the time. A conversation developed.

When he told the Englishman his story, the latter said:

"It must be more than coincidence. Do you realize that there are only five A.A.s in the city of London and that I am one of them? Somehow we have met here."

The rest of the story is commonplace. The English A.A. took the man in tow, provided refreshment and friendship. He insisted that the man come to stay with him at his home in London.

Later, when the man was joined by his wife, all three attended the first A.A. meeting ever held in England—a meeting that had been arranged by another American who was visiting

(Continued on Page 14)

LACK OF MONEY PROVED A.A. BOON

By Bill

Thousands of newer A.A.s inquire, "Just what is The Alcoholic Foundation, what is its place in A.A., who set it up, why do we send it funds?"

Most members, because their groups are in frequent contact with our Headquarters in New York, understand that place to be a sort of a general service to all A.A. Reading *The A.A. Grapevine* each month, they know *The Grapevine* to be our principal monthly journal. But the history of The Alcoholic Foundation and its relation to these vital functions, and to A.A. as a whole, they scarcely understand at all.

Now for a bit of history. During its first years, Alcoholics Anonymous didn't even have that name. Anonymous, nameless indeed, we consisted by late 1937 of but three small clusters of alcoholics—Akron, Ohio, the first group; New York City, the second, and a few members at Cleveland, our third group to be. There were, I should guess, about 50 members in all three cities. The very early pioneering period had passed, Dr. Bob and I having first met at Akron in the spring of 1935. We were becoming sure we had something for those other thousands of alcoholics who didn't yet know any answer. How were we to let them know; just how could the good news be spread? That was the burning question.

"Missionaries?"

Much discussion in a little meeting called by Dr. Hob and me at Akron in the fall of 1937 developed a plan. This plan later proved to be approximately one-third right and about two-thirds wrong—familiar process of trial and error. Because the development of the first groups had been such a slow, hard process we then supposed that none but seasoned pioneers could start new ones. Though we had misgivings, it seemed inevitable that about 20 of our solid members would have to lay aside their personal affairs and go to other cities to create new centers. Much as we disliked the idea, it appeared as if we must take on, temporarily at least, a squad of A.A. missionaries. Plainly, too, these missionaries and their families would have to eat. That would take money—quite a lot of it, we thought!

But that was not all. It was felt we needed A.A. hospitals at Akron and New York, these places being regarded as our twin "Meccas." There excellent medical care and high power spirituality could, we were sure, be sprayed on drunks who would flock from all corners of the

nation—once the magic word "cure" got around. Even as many newer A.A.s still have such fancies, we oldtimers did dream these very dreams. Providentially, neither the A.A. hospital nor our wholesale missionary dreams came true. Had these then materialized, A.A. would surely have been ruined. We would have gone professional on the spot.

Then there was still a third dream. That was to prepare a Book of Experience—the one we know today as *Alcoholics Anonymous*. We were sure that unless our recovery experiences were put on paper, our principles and practices would soon be distorted. We might be ridiculed in the press. Besides, did we not owe at least a book to those alcoholics who couldn't get to our hospitals, or who, perchance, weren't reached right away by our advancing missionaries! As everybody knows, the A.A. book dream did come true—the other dreams didn't.

But it surely looked, in 1937, as though we must have considerable money. Perhaps it was because I lived at New York, where there is supposed to be lots of it, that I was delegated to set about raising funds so our nameless movement might have its "field workers," hospitals and books. How simple it appeared. Did we not already have (in prideful imagination) the beginning of one of the greatest social, medical, and spiritual developments of all time? Weren't we drunks all salesmen? Hadn't I been a Wall Street man? How easy to raise money for such a cause as ours!

The awakening from that money dream was rude. It soon appeared that people with money had little interest in drunks. As for our grandiose scheme of banding alcoholics together in

A. A. RECORDINGS

A 15-minute general talk on A.A. by Bill has been transcribed on a set of two regular 12-inch phonograph records. The records can be played on any standard phonograph.

These records, which are of interest to A.A. members, groups and friends of A.A., are available at the price of \$3.30 per set, prepaid air express, New York; \$4.00, Canada. The records may be obtained by writing Works Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17.

Because the set is sold at near-cost price, it is requested that persons ordering it enclose check or money order with letter. Cost of the set to persons in foreign countries may be obtained on request.

squads, platoons and regiments—well, that was plainly fantastic, wasn't it? Drunks, people said, were difficult enough, one at a time. Why present each American community with an organized regiment of them? Hadn't the donors better put their money into something constructive—like tuberculosis or cancer? Or, why shouldn't they invest in the prevention of alcoholism? One more attempt to salvage hopeless drunks couldn't possibly succeed. Such were the answers to our plea for money.

Then, one day, in the midst of discouragement, something momentous happened. It was another of those critical turning points in A.A. of which we have seen so many that no man can call them coincidence. At the office of my physician brother-in-law, I was bemoaning, in typical alcoholic fashion, how little we poor drunks were appreciated, especially by men of means. I was telling my relative for the tenth time how we had to have money soon—or else. Listening patiently, he suddenly said, "I've got an idea. I used to know a man by the name of Dick R. He was somehow connected with the Rockefellers. But that was years ago. I wonder if he is still there. Let me call up and find out." On what little events our destinies sometimes turn! How could either of us know that a simple phone message was to open a new era in A.A.! That it was to inaugurate The Alcoholic Foundation, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and our A.A. Central Office.

Encouragement

Two days alter my brother-in-law's call, we sat in the Rockefeller offices talking to Dick R. The most lovable of men, Dick was the first of that early series of non-alcoholic laymen who saw us through when the going was very hard; and without whose wisdom and devotion the Alcoholics Anonymous movement might never have been. When he had heard the story, our new friend showed instant understanding. He immediately translated understanding into action. He suggested that some of our alcoholic brotherhood meet with several of his own friends and himself.

Shortly afterward, on a winter's evening in 1937, this meeting took place at Rockefeller Center. Present were Dick R., A. LeRoy C., since known as "Chip," Albert S., Frank A., and my brother-in-law, Leonard S. Dr. Bob and Paul S. came down from Akron. The New York ex-topers numbered half a dozen and were accompanied by Dr. William D. Silkworth, who,

(Continued on Page 13)

SEDATIVES EASY, AND DEADLY, TOO

(Continued from Page 1)

alcoholics ourselves, while we may be veteran "12th Steppers," while we may have helped many patients find the road to recovery; we are not doctors, not even "doctors of alcoholism." We have no knowledge of drugs, the indications for their use, their contra-indications, their actions, their dosage, their dangers, or how to treat the patient if he should show a had reaction to them. The only drug of which we have knowledge is alcohol itself.

Those Violent Cases

Joe Doakes, a new prospect, has telephoned or has written to the box asking for help. Or Joe has contacted us some days ago, has been interviewed a number of times, and has decided to take the A.A. treatment; Mrs. Joe telephones, frantically, that he has come back from town in terrible shape, and she can't do anything with him. Another Joe has been in A.A. for some time, may be one of our best friends, and has a relapse (slip); we are called to straighten him out.

When we arrive at the house we find that Joe is definitely "tight." He may be violent. Perhaps he is abusing the kids, or his wife, or is smashing the furniture. It certainly won't quiet him down or sober him up to talk A.A. to him. Another drink, obviously, is only going to make him tighter; unless we can get enough into him to make him "pass out," and this type of treatment is not entirely without danger; if he does pass out he may be still more difficult to handle when he "comes to." Joe, although he is falling all over the house, may insist that he is "going places and doing things." Joe and Mrs. Joe insist that no doctor be called. We can, of course, smack him in the jaw and put him to sleep—if we are the husky type. This treatment, however, apart from the dangers of a broken jaw or missing teeth for Joe and a broken hand for us, isn't going to be very popular with Mrs. Joe; and Joe is not going to be very enthusiastic about it when he wakes up.

What to do?—Well, we can't let him suffer, and we can't let his family suffer; why should we suffer? Let's give him a couple of "nebs," or "blue heavens," or "blue bombers," or whatever our particular choice of knock-out drops may be. After all we've used them before, we've seen older members use them, and they seem to work fine. Joe'll soon get to sleep, we can leave a few more for Mrs. Joe to give him if he wakes up too soon or too jittery (and we won't get a call in the middle of the night). Tomorrow, after Joe has "slept it off," or partially so at

any rate, we can see him and have a good heart to heart, down to earth A.A. talk, and perhaps get somewhere.

To a medical man the number of "12th Steppers" who travel armed with a "mickey" (pint), and one or other of the barbiturates (nembutal, sodium-amytal, seconal, tuinal, phenobarbitol, or what have you), and dish them out to "drunks" whenever, in their judgment, it seems advisable (or the easiest way out), or leave them with the wife to give later, is nothing short of alarming. It is like giving a small boy a high-power, loaded, rifle to play with.

Sure, in the majority of cases it works fine. The patient goes to sleep for a while, wakes a bit jittery and his wife gives him one or two more and he goes back to sleep again, waking still later well on the road to temporary sobriety. All very nice: no one has had to sit up with him (or on him); no one has a "shiner"; no

more furniture has been broken; he hasn't managed to get out and run up more taxi bills—or smash up his car—or himself—or meet the "Law" and spend the night in jail; the family have had a moderately restful night (and so have we); and we're very popular with everyone. Everybody feels fine (the patient perhaps not so much so), and the whole family is "sold" on A.A. and the fine fellows in it.

But—does it always work this way?—the answer is very definitely no!

Other Reactions

What will be the family's reaction if, after our capsule, the patient becomes much more violent instead of going to sleep? How popular are we going to be if he goes into a coma, with the resulting ambulance and frantic emergency treatment at the hospital—if the doctor gets to the house in time? Supposing, while he is "out" under our capsule he has a heart attack, dies, and an inquest becomes necessary? What if he, later on, develops into a barbiturate addict?

You say—"That can't happen here!" It not only can, and does, but it has probably happened in far more cases than anyone realizes. Very frequently we pick up our newspaper and read of someone who has died "from an overdose of stepping tablets." Nearly all of these sleeping tablets are one or other of the barbiturates, and they can be much more dangerous to the person under the influence of alcohol than they are to the person who simply can't sleep.

Barbiturates, in fact all sedatives and hypnotics, are dangerous drugs. If they were not, the law would not say that they cannot be administered except under a doctor's orders, nor would it be necessary to have a prescription before we can get them from the drug store. True, they have a comparatively wide margin of safety; and for this reason some druggists are rather lax in supplying them, and even some doctors are a bit careless in giving out prescriptions. Nevertheless, should we give an intoxicated alcoholic, or anyone for that matter, a "blue bomber" (sodium-amytal) on our own, and should that person die, we might be just as guilty of manslaughter as we would be if we got drunk and killed someone with our car—and the coroner's jury and the law would very possibly take just that view.

What are some of the dangers of these barbiturates? One is that the presence of alcohol in The body may slow up the absorption of the drug. The desired action does not take place,

(Continued on Page 7)

Men of Extinction

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



A. Benson Butts
Collector of rare old Havanas

The Pleasures of Reading

THINK!

Hindu Psychology: Its Meaning for the West. By Swami Akhilananda
(Harper & Bros., \$2.50)

A knowledge of the principles of Vedanta, or Hinduism, might seem at first impression to offer little aid to the alcoholic, confounded as he is by the urgent perplexities of his own immediate world. Conceding freely that the solution of his own difficulties must be found in a re-integration of his mind, he is, nevertheless, quite likely to reject, even with ridicule, the notion that the teachings of the Yogis could hold anything for him.

And yet the Eastern philosophers have made the hidden mind, which we call the subconscious, and from which so many of our troubles spring, their sole preoccupation for centuries. Hundreds of years ago they passed the stage of excited exploration which we began only recently. For time out of mind they have been devoting themselves to perfecting useful methods of applying principles the existence of which we have only discovered (or re-discovered) within the past 50 years.

All this is made clear, with simple modesty, in this publication of Swami Akhilananda's informal lectures. Never presuming to insist upon the infallibility of his teachings, or to urge their exclusive validity, he relates them to modern Western thought in psychology.

For the Hindu, he says, the greatest expression of the mind lies in its total illumination. Man's chief problem is to develop the total mind and thus to secure that inner joy, which Thomas a Kempis had called "the inborn light," by bringing the mind and body into that balanced state which produces peace and happiness.

This, too, is our problem, particularly that of the alcoholic, whose mind is so often what the Swami calls "an arena of conflicting urges and emotions." It is in dealing with this problem that we may find help in what otherwise might seem an alien philosophy. We may, without either accepting or rejecting the Hindu teachings, gain much from considering the practical rules, set forth by the author, and which have shown through the centuries how the human mind can be brought to peace with itself.

These practical precepts are based on the fundamental proposition that a man through meditation may change the quality of his mental habits in the present and thus direct and determine what his future mental state may be. How the Hindu monk accomplishes this, and teaches others to accomplish it, is in itself a fascinating study; but beyond that, for the alcoholic at least, some slight notion of how the whole mind may be consciously and successfully directed to an ideal is worth all he can give to obtain it. This book perhaps may not provide the whole answer. It should help along the way.—*F.A., New York City.*

THE FOREST AND THE TREES

From Richmond, Va.

Here is a little thought that came to me the other day. Even alcoholics have thoughts. That is one trouble with them. Their fertile, active imaginations run rife with their thoughts. Frequently they have great thoughts which may carry them to the heights of accomplishment or sacrifice, only to be dashed into the pits of defeat and despair by their arrogance and indulgence, where their thoughts are changed to bad, fearsome, apprehensive thoughts and necessitate recourse to the all too-familiar method of surcease—another drink. But this thought may have some value.

You have all heard the expression, "He can't see the forest for the trees," or some such variation of an old familiar saying. It is usually applied to some meticulous individual who, in his extreme carefulness of detail, seems to lose sight of the objective toward which he is working. It is usually applied by some cureless, restless individual who, in his anxiety to reach his

objective, is apt to build his bridge without a keystone.

The thought that occurred to me was that in my drinking days I had seen neither the trees nor the forest. I thought I had. I thought I had seen that great oak with its firm, tough trunk; its widespread branches with their dense foliage, and its high, rounded crest. I thought I had seen the pines and the poplars, their tall,

straight trunks reaching high to bear their smaller, more cone-like tops toward the sunlight. I thought I had seen them; the hickories and the walnuts, the beeches and the birches, the maples and the elms, the ash, the wild cherry, the cedar, even the scorned gum with its twisting grain and its soft, stringy texture so annoying to the woodworker. I thought I had seen them all and more.

I thought I had seen the forest, too, with its leafy canopy of varied color. I had been on high places where I could look down upon it. And I had done just that, for I could see it as it

(Continued on Page 7)

From Chicago

Numerous groups throughout the country have printed booklets, interpreting the 12 Steps of the A.A. program. These booklets have been seen by other groups and adopted by them as a help to newer members. . . .

The question is whether the use of these booklets is more of a detriment than a help to the members.

If the use of the booklets tends to lessen the disposition of the member to THINK for himself, such use is harmful.

Unless and until the member THINKS independently, he has little chance of properly employing any of the Steps in a way beneficial to his problems.

If there is one thing which is responsible for retarding the progress of members in assimilating and using the Steps it is failure to THINK. If the members have an opportunity to avoid THINKING, by reading the thoughts and interpretations of others, as contained in these booklets, you may be sure that some will do it.

There are members in most groups who have, been in their group for extended periods of time without actually absorbing the Steps. They remain mentally disturbed and are likely to have "slips" occasionally. They have read and re-read the Steps, have listened to other members discuss the Steps and have conscientiously done everything possible to profit by the program, except to actually THINK. They mistake good intentions and wishing for actual THINKING. They mistake lip-service to the program for THINKING. They are sincere people who are trying their best to attain sobriety through the program but they DO NOT THINK. If the use of the booklets by such people is going to postpone the day when they actually THINK out their situations, THINK about the object of each of the Steps, THINK about the application of each Step to their individual problems; if they are going to avoid their own individual THINKING by reading and mouthing the thoughts of others, it would seem that the use of such booklets is a step in the wrong direction.

The writer believes that these booklets of "Interpretations of the Steps" have a place in A.A. meetings, but, if they are going to be taken by any of the members as a means of avoiding thoughts of their own, they are not as helpful as they may have been intended to be.

In the same sense that we could read the big book and all other A.A. literature, until we were blue in the face, without getting any real good out of it, so it is with these booklets. Reading only acquaints us with what action we should put into the program. It does not con-

(Continued on Page 8)

AN ANALYSIS OF 12th STEP WORK

(How can 12th Step work be made most effective? Can any specific techniques be developed for it? Patterns are becoming apparent in the sponsorship plans evolved by a number of groups. Because of the interest in these and because of the vital importance of 12th Step work and the need to learn how it works best, the A.A. Grapevine will present a series of studies on the subject, beginning with the following account of what kind of 12th Step work helped one A.A.)

From New York City

Sponsorship, as we now refer to 12th Step work, is being given much attention these days and since I have given some thought in the last year to my own vivid impressions during my first six months in A.A., I am going to attempt to record them for other members. I am calling these first six months my "threshold period." During that time a number of minor and major upsets nearly plunged me back into my former confusion. I am aware that others have been less fortunate during their threshold period.

It so happened I was fortunate in having a sponsor who was free, and content, to give a great deal of his time to me. Moreover, he proved companionable. He insists today he learned more than I did. Be that as it may, in our mutual desire to find to the last detail those twists which had undermined our reason for years, we delved about as deeply into ourselves as our groping intelligences, rather new to this sort of thing, permitted. I lifted the lid of many a long closed incident in my past, wandered down many a dark, dank corridor of my mind, viewed and reviewed the sepulchral nature of this strange individual—the fugitive me. I could not have done this alone, nor did I feel complete trust in my sponsor at first. I gave him sneak glimpses, or should I say I allowed myself fragmentary exposure. I remember preparing the retreat before making the advance, in the early attempts at least. But about the time I was ready to expose the entire truth in any one instance, so was he ready to hear it, and often when I revealed to him the final detail it was only to discover that he had guessed me days before.

Eerie Navigating

As I groped deeper and deeper into my disordered and cluttered mind, and made regular return voyages down gloomy caverns gradually becoming familiar, I became a fairly competent navigator in these eerie recesses. In months of constant probing I ultimately developed objectivity, and slowly escaped from the suffocation of an imprisoned subjective viewpoint. And, then, as my sponsor and I engaged in 12th Step work I saw myself more clearly than ever,

through others!—amazing moment. In doing this exploratory work my sponsor and I were guided by A.A. literature, what we observed at meetings, and matters we discussed at dinner each night and always felt we were simply putting into practice the sound philosophy and preachments of Alcoholics Anonymous.

What was employed, eventually, was a device we referred to as a "home-made Freud machine," not entirely unlike the cartoon strip's Dr. Womug and his famous "space-disintegrator." In truth, there is no special limitation within the human mind, and the intelligence, liberated from the inhibition of emotional cliché, can soar or delve, can race or walk, can investigate at free will. I tore a clipping from the masthead of an editorial column the other night to reproduce it here: "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*"—John, viii, 32.

Working Backwards

As a working formula, an over-simplification perhaps, but handy as a carpenter's rule, my sponsor created the phrase: "A.A. works backwards." This is not half so paradoxical as it sounds at first and a world of wisdom is buried in this brief summary. Try talking an alcoholic out of an impulse and see where you get and then work it backwards with patience and understanding and wait for him (with gentle guidance) to talk himself out of this same impulse and see where you get! There is little question in my mind about the wisdom buried in "A.A. works backwards." It works backwards, as we interpreted that statement, or it doesn't work at all. The frontal attack is all those ways tried on the alcoholic *before* he comes into A.A.!

I shall never forget the first visitor who came into my hotel room the night of January 8, 1946, in El Paso, Texas. Everything I then knew how to care for in this world was gone—money, social and professional standing, the people I thought were friends, the world as I had chosen to see the world for all my "adult" years, 15 of them. I was sick, I was alone, I was smashed—and mightily disturbed. All I really knew was that something was terribly wrong with the world and me. I suspected that part of the difficulty lay with me, but I wasn't sure how much. I also held a strong suspicion that my drinking had had a heck of a lot to do with it, but I hadn't the slightest idea how I could "control" or "stop" my drinking. I'd tried for years, and in the last five years my efforts had grown increasingly futile and hopeless. I knew nothing about myself, as I really was, and held a fabulous assortment of notions about myself the

parting from which had never once occurred to me.

That night of January 8, I was fogbound, bewildered, lost, and very sorry for myself. I had heard of A.A.; I held a deep-sealed doubt that A.A. could help me. I was a confirmed "individualist"—and regarded all mass movements or group activities with sharp suspicion. I was a fine, home-made snob, too, and a terrific egotist and my strongest impulses were in the direction of speed, now, at once, immediately. I was impatient, possessed of storming emotional demons all urging instant restoration of the good King Charles. The truth is I secretly hoped that my first A.A. visitor would be a multi-millionaire, or at least a well-heeled citizen in the community who would enter my life with charm and grace and resource, recognize me as the worthy young man I thought I was, and instantly summon my old and prosperous world back for me. Perhaps a few phone calls would do it ... and an immediate stake so I could heel myself with that rich, green folding money in which my faith for years had lain with simple, trusting naively.

Instead, my first A.A. visitor was a nervous, hurried gentleman, direct in speech whose wife was waiting for him downstairs and who had a date for dinner and who had just come out of the county jail himself and was now working as a post office clerk. This was quite a come down and my interest in A.A. wilted rapidly. My first visitor made a call to a second A.A., however, and arranged for me to meet this second fellow an hour or so later. After a brisk hand-clasp the first A.A. was gone.

Illusion, One

I went out for a walk and I doubt if my spirit has ever been more sorely tried. I'd taken that fateful plunge of writing a letter, which to my old hypersensitive nature was a shocking confessional of weakness, and this letter had produced—not my dream-wish of a rich and powerful benefactor but a hurried, unimportant, slim-pursed post office clerk. Little did I realize then the profound contradictions of altitude which were at work within me, tearing me to pieces inside. On the one hand I was an esthetic, sensitive, cultured person and on the other, and with equal if not stronger force, I was a crass, arrogant, conceited ass with low materialistic designs on everyone.

The man who walked those dark streets of El Paso for that hour on that cold January night was a sick man whose great trouble in life was he didn't know how sick he really was, or in

(Continued on Page 8)

No A. A. Movie

Hal H. Wallis, motion picture producer, has cancelled plans to make a full-length motion picture about Alcoholics Anonymous. Present heavy schedules would defer production of a full-length picture about A.A. until late 1948, Mr. Wallis said.

In view of this and the fact that several motion pictures have been and are being made on the subject of alcoholism, the trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation have decided to postpone indefinitely permission to make a full-length A.A. picture.

THE FOREST AND THE TREES

(Continued from Page 5)

marched up and over the lesser hills, down and through the valleys, until its green expanse had spread about and beyond me as far as sight could reach. Who could fail to see its grandeur and beauty?

Yes, I thought I had seen both the forest and the trees. but I had not seen the forest because in the glimpse that I had had of it its overpowering vastness had awed and cowed me. My frightened, shrinking, gasping soul reached for

some succor to support me to safely as I turned away. I had not the courage to look.

Neither had I seen the trees, for all that I saw of that great oak was the danger that lurked in its shade where no blade of grass or blossoming flower could grow. All that I saw of those stately pines and poplars was the seeming waste in the rotting remnants of others of their kind that had not been so strong. Death, destruction, and decay were all about me whenever I stepped among the trees. I could not understand, so became resentful, even rebellious.

Now, after months of sobriety, I believe I am beginning to see. I have already seen that delicate wildflower blooming at the edge of the oak tree's shade. Let us hope that the winds continue to move those great branches about and permit the sunlight to filter through to the aid of that little flower. Let us hope that the searching roots will permit sufficient sustenance to remain in the soil around it to keep that flower from withering before its allotted time. I have already seen the young pines lifting their ambitious heads where some greater force has struck their elders down. Let us hope they are not overcrowded. Let us hope they also may have the strength to lift their green heads on tall, straight trunks like the others that have gone before.

I have been again where I could view the forest from the hilltop and this time was not cowed by its vastness. Rather in my glimpse of its grandeur I caught a hint of an indomitable Force exemplified in it and supporting it from above. This time I looked up as well as down and I caught a suggestion of the reason for its magnitude. Every tree there had its roots like the great oak deep in the good soil of the earth beneath it. Yet none could live unless they looked up as well as down. Therefore, all strove, for the Power that come from above. Some had not the strength to continue their upward look and fell, but in falling continued to give to those that came after. Others were stricken after reaching great height, but in falling made room for ambitious successors. Even the great oak may some day succumb.

I thank God that I have had this second glimpse of the forest and the trees and that I was enabled to turn my glance upward. I pray for the strength to continue that upward look, that my shrunken soul may be restored, and that it may continue to grow, until the time shall come for me to leave those who surround me. I hope that when that time comes, I will, in falling, leave behind me some evidence of good work done, some word, some thought that will prove useful to those who succeed to my small place and be of assistance to them in their upward struggle.—*J.T.W.*

SEDATIVES EASY, AND DEADLY, TOO

(Continued from Page 4)

so we decide that this patient has more tolerance than normal and needs a bigger dose. Over a period of time he may have several such doses. Then, as the alcohol in his system decreases, the body suddenly starts to absorb the drug which has been lying peacefully in the stomach or intestines; all at once our patient has several doses acting at once—and the results may be disastrous.

There is another possibility, more likely in the case of an A.A. member who has relapsed (a slipper), than in the case of a new member. Somehow the wires get crossed and a number of A.A.s are called. After our visit and sedative someone else turns up. Joe doesn't mention our visit—he may not even remember it—and he gets another capsule or so. Perhaps it becomes necessary to call a doctor; he doesn't know of our medicine, so—some more capsules, or perhaps a hypo. The result is the same—an overdose. (I heard of one A.A. member who had given his "patient" a couple of capsules without much affect, and finally a doctor had to be called. Before he arrived this "doctor of alcoholism" said to his intoxicated patient, "Don't tell the Doc I gave you anything, if he gives you something just don't take it.")

There are people who are very susceptible to all the barbiturates, and a very small dose will be too much. There is no way of recognizing these, even for a doctor, but he has the knowledge and the facilities to give immediate treatment.

With some patients the barbiturates, in the presence of alcohol, cause intense excitement instead of sedation, and they become almost insane. Others have a definite allergy to them, and if given a dose may develop all sorts of things.

A patient under the influence of a sedative may swallow his tongue, and choke to death before expert help arrives. Some patients may have a heart condition that we don't know about; while under our sedative they may have

a heart attack and die.

Many people are not aware of the fact that sometimes barbiturates can cause a definite hang-over. This may be even more unpleasant than an alcoholic hang-over, and if there are the two together it can be very bad.

Finally there is the question of addiction. Barbiturate addiction is a very definite condition, and one that can be very difficult to treat. The alcoholic is much more susceptible to becoming on addict than is the normal person. He has used alcohol for years as a crutch to help him avoid the unpleasant things of life and as an escape from his problems. He is introduced to one of the barbiturates as a crutch to help him over the jitters; and he finds that, not only does it help him over this trial, but it will partially give him the same escape that alcohol does—and another addiction has been started.

No! All sedatives are dangerous drugs, except in the hands of the expert. None of them should ever be given, except on the specific orders of a doctor. No "12th Stepper" should ever have them as part of his "emergency kit." If our patient cannot be controlled by tact, reasoning, patience, or even a little mild violence—(you don't have to knock him out; silting on his chest may be excellent treatment and the exercise may be good for you at the same time), then you must insist, whether it's a new contact or a "slipper," that a doctor be called.

On this question of sedatives it might be of interest to know that a good many doctors are getting away from the use of sedatives in the treatment of acute intoxication, and even in the treatment of delirium tremens. Other treatments are being tried, and some of them seem to be definitely superior to sedation. None of these, however, are for the layman to use. Our job, in 12th Step work, is to show the patient that there is a "way out" of his troubles, and to try and show him the road to recovery. The treatment of complications—such as acute intoxication—must be left to the doctors.—*Bill H.*

AN ANALYSIS OF 12th STEP WORK

(Continued from Page 6)

exactly what way. The grim necessity of "finding a way out" held me to my resolve to "see this one through." The adhesive of my resolve was the only asset I had in this world that night. I didn't know this, of course, and so, back in my hotel room a little while later when the second A.A. came in with a handful of pamphlets and a curious, somewhat frightened look on his large face, I heard my hopes crash to earth like the large oak in the forest. Pamphlets! Indeed. What had happened to the juices of humanity? My new A.A. acquaintance didn't say much, had a rather owlish appearance, and I frequently caught him staring at me curiously. I later learned he was scared to death of me, being a rather timid soul himself, and I being his first call! We went to dinner, and this helped a lot. Slowly the rudiments of my plight were unfolded to his attentive ears. He was a marvelous listener, and I wonder if listening isn't about the finest attribute any A.A. sponsor can possess. This man became a cushion for my emotional outbursts, my heaving to left and right of center in the weeks and months thereafter. He never faltered from his chosen role of buffer, never obeyed the numerous impulses which must have surged within him to throttle me and my ambitious complaints. I'll never forget how dull and disappointing this man seemed to me that first night, and the night thereafter when he look me to my first A.A. meeting in El Paso.

For This, Chess!

A sickening, limp feeling bit me inside—so this was A.A.? No instant remedy, no smooth, gay companionship, no surging fellowship of good will and monied generosity. I was still alone. My first meeting dismayed me, I felt an outsider, I couldn't seem to hook into anything real. Of course, I was in a chaos of conflicting passions. As we walked back to my hotel from that first meeting he invited me to join him in a quiet game of chess the following night. Until my sponsor reads this, he will not know how close I came on that El Paso street corner, and in the sickness of my sorrow, to turning down his humble offer of a game of chess. And I would be anything but honest if I said I accepted his offer for any other reason than that I was still desperate, and had nothing better to do the following night.

I recite this a year later, writing as I am on a typewriter in an office from which alcoholism hurled me five years ago, fully aware that the



delicate balances of psychology involved on that evening of January 8, 1946, were balances on which my future hung by a slender, oh so slender thread. So little could have turned me back that night. A few ill-chosen words would have given that be-fogged and confused character who was I reason enough to toss his own salvation aside. The complex psychology of all of us is our subject and the slight quality of the slender thread which binds us at these profound moments in our lives is our hairline route to recovery. This tender passion, the vagrant heart, the blindfold mind, is to me the sacred concern of all of us in A.A. who wish to do 12th Step work. All that we really know is that a vast unknown world exists, a world into which but a few of the most skilled explorers have so far been able to navigate with any success whatsoever. What makes the heart beat so? What leads the mind of man? Where lies the reason?

Who Said, Easy?

And all this works backwards, gently and without effort, casually and slowly, and buried within this miracle of navigation there lies all the tender mercy of the human heart, the nobility of understanding and strength of compassion.

During my first six months in Alcoholics Anonymous I managed quite successfully to keep bone dry, but all that time I bitterly resented the phrase, "Easy does it." I resented "Easy does it" because that simple and profound homily was exactly what I most needed to bring into control the surging, infantile passions which had ruled my life for nearly two decades and

which were little inclined easily to abdicate their throne. Long after I had stopped drinking, I was still *thinking*, alcoholically. Nine months after I had my last drink, I was still able to verge on emotional hysteria, hysteria which would have been strong enough to undo everything accomplished up to that time had it not been for certain devices—bear traps, I called them—for stalemating recurrences.

A few weeks after I had joined A.A., my sponsor and I worked our way through the treachery of false recovery and partial right thinking. I nearly lost my own grip because I was unable to do as much as I felt should be done for an old railroader many months drunk. Throughout all this, my sponsor, who never said very much, paddled along, hoping for the best, picking up a cue now and then, oaring occasionally when the going was rough, but in the main letting me do it all myself, especially when I had to do it the hard way (and he knew how to do it the easy way), but felt it was better for me to learn myself any old way, so long as I got there *myself*.—Ned A.

THINK!

(Continued from Page 5)

stitute the necessary action. Any constructive action that we put into A.A. will only be such action as results from our own individual thought.

There seems to be some danger that this essential individual thinking may be replaced by reading the thoughts of others.—J. O'C.

A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Out of the Red (Both Ways)—Alanon Association, Inc., club of Newark, N.J., A.A.s, has announced that in six months it has changed a deficit of nearly \$5,000 into a healthy surplus through a series of various activities and prompt dues paying. Alanon now has a yearly functioning cost of \$50,000 for a tremendous list of activities. Copies of *The Alanon News* list community sings, parlor nights, women's card parties, booster club meetings, dances, game room entertainment and good restaurant facilities, in addition to monthly Inter-Group mass meetings and other major events in the auditorium. Plans for the future are equally ambitious with modernizing the wiring and light, providing adequate fire exits and possible changes in the restaurant operation are under consideration. Alanon has had a swift, mushroom growth from 70 members who bought the club two and a half years ago to nearly 400 who own it today. A steadily growing number use it daily and nightly.

Women A.A.s Meet Monthly —Women alcoholics in the Kansas City, Mo., Group are now holding monthly meetings at group headquarters for the purpose of making it possible for new members to meet most of the women members, who now number 54. These meetings supplement the central neighborhood discussions and the social meetings but are not offered as a substitute for them. Sessions are informal, but a carefully planned program is presented, followed by an open discussion in which new members are urged to participate. Subjects discussed deal with phases of the A.A. program and problems peculiar to women alcoholics. Attendance has been good and it is felt the meetings have a definite place in the Kansas City program.

Institution Feels A.A. Effect -An article, "Five Years of Progress," published in *The Clarion* of California Institution for Women, says: "In December, 1945, the initial meeting was held of Alcoholics Anonymous with a membership of 15. That group has now grown to 120 with regular meetings every Monday and open meetings with outside groups the first Sunday of each month. The entire campus has felt the effect of this A.A. program for a better way of living." In another part of the anniversary publication is an account of the visit of an A.A. Group from North Hollywood which concludes, "Live one day at a time. Be selfish to

the extent that you let nothing come between you and your sobriety. Outside influences cannot affect you if you build from the inside out."

Organizers Are Busy—The Ossining, N. Y., Group, organized late in March, with its first meeting in April, now has about 100 at its official sessions. New groups have been formed in the northwest part of Rochester, N. Y., to be known as the North-West Groups of A.A., with meetings every night except Sunday so that members can attend the open meetings of the Rochester Central Groups at 12 Andrews Street. The new meeting room is in the Riviera Theatre Building, 1451 Lake Avenue, with meetings starting at 8:30. Answering a definite need in the San Fernando Valley, a daytime meeting has been organized to meet each Monday at 12:15 in the North Hollywood club house at 4343 Radford Street. The Group is described as "co-ed." Wauchula, Fla., reports organization of a group which now numbers 10, doing well with 12th Step work. Visitors are welcome. Starting as a branch of the Sacramento Group in September, 1946, the Woodland, Calif., Group has grown from eight members to 21. Meeting on Tuesday nights at members' homes, the present problem is to find more space, as the wives usually attend.

GI's Group -Ex-GI members of the Omaha, Nebr., Group have organized a group within the group, open to all ex-servicemen, which meets each Wednesday evening to discuss servicemen's problems as well as servicemen's alcoholism, which are often mixed together. Local veterans' organizations have been contacted. World War I veterans are also attending. Since starting almost a year ago the Chapel Hill, N. C., Group has branched out with groups started in Burlington, Raleigh and Durham. Although losing some members to the new organizations, stimulating programs have kept the attendance between 20 and 40 and members report it has not been "too difficult to keep interest alive." About 15 attended the first meeting, an open one, in Atlantic, Ia., with visitors from Council Bluffs, Ia., and Omaha, Nebr., present to help get things started. The three Atlantic members have arranged to meet Wednesday nights at the Hotel Whitney in Atlantic. Two members of the Binghamton, N. Y., Group have joined a couple of others to start a Norwich, N. Y., Group and have reported to *The A.A. Grapevine* that an open meeting in conjunction with public spirited citizens, city officials, doctors, and others is

planned soon. Visiting A.A.s may make contact at 83 Mitchell Street. With an attendance of 32 and an actual membership of eight, the Neosho, Mo., Group got launched with a strictly "town hall" meeting as the result of a request to the Joplin, Mo., Group. There were visitors from seven towns in response to invitations and an advertisement in a local paper, which also carried a favorable news article written by *The A.A. Grapevine's* correspondent. Organized in January, 1946, the Clinton, Okla., Group now numbers 18 active members and about three months ago was split into two groups, the other being at Cordell, with many members attending sessions of both each week.

Discuss Northwest Conference—Possibilities of a Northwest conference have been discussed recently, according to the Beacon Hill Group of Victoria, B. C., Canada, with Vancouver and Vancouver Island Groups to join with those from Washington and Oregon. Victoria has been mentioned as a possible locale with a two or three day meeting suggested. Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and other Northwest groups are reported as welcoming the idea and promising to send good representations if it is held. Victoria A.A.s are also following the amendments and debates on a brief presented recently to the Provincial Cabinet by Vancouver, Victoria and New Westminster A.A.s concerning education on alcoholism.

More and Better Clubs—Formal opening of new clubrooms last month was held by Mankato, Minn., A.A.s, with speakers from Colfax, Wis., and Minneapolis. A local member gave a brief history and a letter from Bill W. was read. According to the president of the Alano society there, the group was two years old early this spring and has grown from two men, who started out in July, 1944, and by March, 1945, had drawn in five others. First meeting in homes, a local hotel room was used later and served until March, 1946, when two rooms were leased in a downtown building. This year 2,600 square feet of space in a new building were leased for four and a half years. The 46 regular members spent about \$4,000 in fixing up the quarters. Mankato has four women members, one of whom is the oldest in sobriety. Quarters for the club in Denver, Colo., have been enlarged substantially during the past six months and the membership is still growing. In Omaha, Nebr., a drive for the building fund closed last month.

(Continued on next page)

About \$2500 was put into the clubroom, including; a kitchen with modern, complete equipment for social activities. Redecoration, remodeling, lighting and modern furniture were included in improvements. The recreation room in the basement is not complete, but the final drive is expected to take care of this.

Birthdays Recall Growth—More than 400 persons attended the third anniversary of A.A. in Memphis, Term., at the Hotel Chisca recently. From three members in April, 1944, Memphis now has three groups, Downtown, 152 Madison, closed meeting Friday; Crosstown, Character Builders Hall, closed meeting Tuesday, and Overton Park, at the clubhouse, Monday, all sessions being at 8 o'clock. In addition there is an A.A. breakfast at Britling's on Madison Avenue, open, 9:30 A.M. Sunday; 12th Step discussion at 152 Madison, closed, 3:30 Sunday afternoons; open house, open at 8 Tuesday nights; and Questions and Answers, closed session for new members at 8 Wednesday nights. Since many of these sessions are closed, the Overton Park Group has been holding "Family Open Meetings" about once a month with local people in charge. The open meeting at the anniversary party was addressed by a well-known Des Moines, Ia., attorney, who told how he came into A.A. through a man whom he had prosecuted for drunkenness. In Memphis there is also considerable interest in neighboring groups throughout the region in Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee and even in Southern Kentucky. The Central Club room at 152 Madison is open every day from 9 A.M. until midnight for visitors, with a member in charge. With the cooperation of a physician in a nearby veterans' hospital, weekly visits are being made by Memphis A.A.s to the hospital. The San Antonio, Tex., Group held its second birthday party recently with the singing of "Thank God, We Have A.A." to the tune "The Eyes of Texas" as one of the features. It has been printed on small cards for distribution by the group.

In Kansas city—At the sixth anniversary of A.A. in Kansas city, Mo., it was recalled to the attendance of 550 that the group was started when two local men, unknown to each other, were brought together by a traveling A.A. Today the membership of 350 includes 54 women. Ten have been dry five years; nine, four years; 10, three years; 33, two years; 77, one year. There are 10 husband and wife teams, six who have brothers or sisters in some group; two father-son combinations; one man sponsored his son-in-law, one non-alcoholic woman has a husband and brother-in-law in the Kansas City Group and a brother and sister in other groups. None of the original three are now in Kansas City's Group, but all are still in A.A. and two

have been dry since the beginning. More than 20 groups have been started by Kansas City A.A.s, including two at the Federal Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kans. Recently 40 of the 68 members and 11 visitors from Kansas city groups helped observe the second anniversary at Leavenworth. This group has grown from five members under the Kansas City sponsorship which has provided books, literature and subscriptions to *The A.A. Grapevine*. At the request of members who had been transferred to the honor farm a group was started there last August. Two members of the Kansas city Group attend each of the weekly meetings. Less than 10 percent of the 80 members who have been released since the group started have been returned to the penitentiary or are known to have encountered legal or alcoholic difficulties. This figure is substantially lower than the percentage of the entire number of men released from the penitentiary. Eighteen members of the Jefferson City, Mo., Group took a local bus to attend the Kansas City anniversary sessions. First anniversary for Wooster, O., A.A.s was held last month with a dinner at Weitzell Hall and speakers from Columbus and Toledo, O. About 175 attended the Daytona Beach, Fla., fifth anniversary at the Hotel Osceola, coming from as far away as Sarasota, Fla., and Savannah, Ga. Judges, doctors and clergymen were among those attending. Five speakers, including A.A.s from Orlando, and Washington, D. C., as well as Father Brunton of the Episcopal Church, spoke and there was an open house at the clubrooms, 105 Ivy Lane, where the pool table had been transformed to serve as a buffet supper table.

Seven Originals—the seven original members of the Passaic, N. J., Group spoke at the first anniversary there last month. The thought was expressed that success in the growth of membership has been of educational value to the city. Interest and backing of clergy, doctors, and good coverage by a daily paper are reported as having helped. Interest on the part of a reporter resulted in friendly, intelligent, sympathetic columns stressing the spiritual foundation of the 12 Steps. The Rev. F. R. Edward Dowling, S.J., of St. Louis, Mo., was principal speaker at the third anniversary of the Marshalltown, Ia., Group at the Hotel Tallcorn recently. Four Marshalltown men representing industry, law enforcement, the clergy and medicine spoke briefly summarizing the A.A. program with regard to their vocations. In the afternoon Father Dowling conducted a Cana Conference and a smoker was given at the hotel for visitors.

What Some Are Doing—The Atlanta, Ga., Group recently heard a fine talk by a Red Bank,

N. J., member visiting there, who also spoke to the Rome, Ga., Group. Fair Lawn, N. J., recently elected officers by secret ballot with all but one member participating. A secretary, chairman, treasurer, *Grapevine* correspondent and committee members were chosen. Cards bearing the heading, "Is Alcohol Your Problem?" and another telling of A.A. meetings have been put out by the Dodd Town Group of East Orange, N. J. Meetings for wives have been planned by the Spirit Lake-Milford-Spencer, Ia., Group. A new leader for May, June and July was selected recently by Plainfield, N. J., A.A.s. Both groups in Eau Claire, Wis., are reported growing with good liaison. Many A.A.s take advantage of good roads to attend other meetings in a radius of 100 miles. The Bellflower, Calif., Group is trying out a scheme by which four leaders were elected at once, the one getting the greatest number becoming chairman, while the other three preside in weekly rotation with the chairman in an effort to bring more initiative into the group and promote better 12th Step work. Alcansia Inc., of the South Los Angeles, Calif., Group, held a free gala dance May 31 with many prizes and refreshments. Proceeds went to the building fund. From Charlotte, N. C., *The A.A. Grapevine* hears that the Myers Park Group held its first meeting in February and has grown fast since that time. Meetings are Monday nights at 8 at the Myers Park Methodist Church. The workings of A.A. were explained at an open meeting sponsored by Cleburne, Tex., A.A.s at the First Baptist Church. A member of the Shawnee, Okla., Group who works for a Wewoka paper has been running A.A. articles there, telling of the program and pointing out that A.A.s from Holdenville, Ada and other towns have been attending the meetings.

Church Welcomes A.A.—The Church in Aurora (community) program recently carried a bulletin saying, "We are honored to have a meeting of A.A. here at the church every Sunday afternoon. There is real "togetherness" in those meetings, and a spirit of humility, honesty and mutual helpfulness not often encountered in these times. Perhaps the methods and the spiritual dynamic which have helped alcoholics so much could be well used in other areas of life, too." The program was sent to *The A.A. Grapevine*, by a member of the Kent, O., Group.

A.A. on Sports Pages—In connection with the Kentucky Derby A.A. drew mention from two *New York Herald Tribune* sports columnists. Writing in "Views of Sport" Red Smith in describing the week said in part "The Ken-

(Continued on Page 16)

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

For the Young A.A.

From St. Louis, Missouri

Our A.A. Program is a very difficult one for any alcoholic, but more so for the young alcoholic, he has many obstacles to overcome. To start with, in many cases, family and friends often sincerely believe he is just young, unsettled, perhaps a little wild, but he'll outgrow it—just give him time—and there's usually one broad, understanding shoulder for him to cry on, to help ease the rough spots, to smooth things over when they get pretty hot and he finds himself in the doghouse—again!

His hangovers, shakes and butterflies don't assume as much importance because he is young. And because he *is* young, his body responds more readily to medication—he snaps back faster, is sooner on his feet, until the next excuse for a drink arises. Our young alcoholic continues to get by, bumping his head a little here and there, stepping on his family and friends—"They know I didn't mean it—I had a rough day—I needed a drink—have to have something to keep me going. If that's all the understanding I get around here, I'll go back to Joe's where I've got some real friends"—and he's off again.

There's a lot of room here in A.A. for the young alcoholic. We have a terrific exchange department. Not only do we offer a *new life* for an *old* one, but a new life plus at least ten years and the bill of sale is guaranteed—if you follow directions. It isn't easy, as I've said—it's very difficult, he's having a terrific time—the life of the party. You're missing out on a lot of fun—but remember, my young alcoholic friend, it's going to be his hangover, not yours. Many times you will feel you are missing out on a "lot of fun"—you'll feel that you're a wet blanket. Your friends may shun you—treat you as though you have the purple blight.

Most of your new-found friends here in A.A. have a few years on you. You think you made a mess of your life! You say it takes a great deal of courage to start over. You've only started. Take a good look around now and learn something about real courage! The kind of courage that makes them go on to find the serenity and peace of mind, which probably in most instances will be the only gain, the only reward.

We, too, have squandered time, money, and opportunity—but, through the grace of God—and *only* through the grace of God—don't ever forget that, some of our time has been saved for us. Regaining the lost money and opportunities is up to us.

We need more than physical help, we need spiritual aid also. We are dependent on God. We should link our arms in each other's and go on, helping and strengthening each other, accepting help when we need it and humbling ourselves, so we can sooner reach the goal we are striving to attain!—*I.A.G.*

Climbing Out

Linda Vista, Calif.

Years ago I started a downward plunge from the top of the hill. I slid a short ways down, dug in my toes and started back up, but after a short climb I lost my grip and started down again. This time I slid past the place where I made my first stop; before I grabbed on and started back up again, only to slip again before I reached the top. This became a repeating process. Slipping, grabbing on, climbing up a ways, then down again. Each time farther down, each time harder to start up again, until finally I plunged into a hole, not at the bottom of the hill, but below the bottom. The hole was so deep that there was no light at the top. All was lost, there was nothing left to do but sink on into oblivion; just go ahead and drink myself to death.

Then a couple of strangers stuck their heads down that hole and said, "Fellow, if you want to get out of there, if you really want to be sober and stay sober, we'll drop you a ladder and if you can grab the bottom rung and hold on to it we will help you climb out of that hole."

Down came that ladder, the ladder of the A.A. program of 12 Steps. I grabbed on and hung on to the first one like grim death.

Since then I have made some progress up the ladder and hope some day to reach the top. But I'm in no hurry. I took about 35 years to slide down into that hole from which there was no escape except by the ladder of A.A., so if it takes 35 years to get back up again I'll be doing a fair job.

The way I look at it is this: I have close to four years' sobriety now, roughly that is one-ninth of 35, so I'm about one-ninth of the way-back up to the top. And I'm enjoying every minute of the climb back. I had read about peace and contentment, but had begun to figure that the only thing that had it was the contented cows on the can of milk.

But thank God and A.A. I'm finding that I,

too, can have peace and contentment as long as I don't lose my grip on that bottom rung.

My advice to new members, and all old ones who are having trouble, is get the 1st Step, but get it good and then take in the meetings regularly, take part in them, help others, but don't be in a hurry. You have a lifetime ahead of you to work the program, so learn to enjoy all of it and stop that headlong rush to finish everything today. Take it easy and the program will take care of you and take you any place you want to go, either here or hereafter.—*J.F.H.*

His Fears Banished

From Inglewood, Calif.

Undoubtedly, the prayers of my wife, and possibly those of friends, were responsible for my awakening from the benumbed insensibility of my state of mind. My 50 years of drinking had left in my mind only thoughts of fear, remorse, and regret. The future seemed to hold nothing for me but a continuation of the failures and megrims of the past. By these constant thoughts a tomb was created in which I existed with my egotism. Kind friends, and loved ones, with many gestures of friendliness and consolation, endeavored to enter my sepulchre, but with my acrimonious tongue, they were unadmitted. Inside those walls I had many fears to combat—fear of want, fear of failure, fear of responsibility, and the fear of my own inadequacy and loss of pride. The stupefaction attained from alcohol seemed my only recourse, and I drank, long and hard. But one day, while in despair, something entered that tomb of mine, and without knocking. Then that something started right to work tearing the wall down from about me—walls that I had been 50 years in building. With those walls of doubt, fear and uncertainty removed, I found myself gazing into a light that revealed the happy faces of old and new friends, and the contented look of loved ones. This was the miracle brought to me by the prayers of wife and friends, and a book called *Alcoholics Anonymous*.—*B.A.T.*

Progress Down Under

From Spring Grove, New Zealand

My first call to help a case came on the Thursday before Good Friday. I had been writing to a man who had not told me much except that the inquiry was not for himself. He wanted to see me next time I was in Wellington. On Thursday he telegraphed, "Come at once if possible," and with a bit of luck with an airway booking I was in Wellington within four hours. I now have two members in Wellington.

One is a widow, age 63, whose husband died
(Continued on next page)

two years ago. I think periodic outbreaks have been the rule for some time. Inquiry was from her daughter's boy friend, who was not supposed to know about her "trouble." During the holidays, when she could get nothing to drink—daughter was away—her reserve broke down and she approached the boy to get her some alcohol. This cleared the way and I spent a deal of time with her. I got her sobered up and back to normal routine and left the book with her. I know this is only the start, but it is a start and I'll work on this case like mad. I wish I was in Wellington—but if she breaks down I *know* she will tell me and then I will bring her over here for a time. As she was a woman and I had never had anything to do with an alcoholic woman (except by post!!) I took over my letters from New York and read them to her. I was delighted at the impression they made. Oh, I feel so well and happy and fine these days!

My second member is H. C. This man is single, age 43, an ex-sailor, army cook and general man of all work. He saw the film, "The Lost Weekend." and carried round our newspaper announcement for weeks before writing. He has taken stock of himself, his gradual fall in the world, his loss of personal belongings and the usual things that go with the alcoholic's fall. His mental altitude is, therefore, just right and I think he will make good progress.

Apart from these two people, there are a heap of prospects and cases that will come our way in time. I am trying to secure a P. O. Box in Wellington in the name of A.A. I think it would be good to have this address. It could be the job of my new members to send the mail on to me and I could answer from here. The Wellington address would be the foundation of a permanent headquarters—which will come in time.

Is it possible that any members will visit this country in the course of business in the next few years? Anyone would get a great welcome here and might be able to help us a lot.

I had a lovely letter from a member of the Bermuda Group. It appears that my letter in reply to the good wishes of the group was read at a meeting and this new member added his good wishes. It really is fun getting this sort of letters.—*I. MacE.*

Learning; Why

From Bennington, Vt.

When I was drinking, I was in an alcoholic fog. I couldn't think straight. I was thinking in circles. Actually my thinking was a combination of fear and worry which went round and round but always came back to the bottle for relief and for escape. Then came the physical and mental jitters, then remorse, then resent-

ment, then frustration, then more drinking. A vicious circle which I was unable to break.

When I tried to stop drinking, I was exerting my will against the effect, the symptom, rather than the cause. In my condition this was reasonable and consistent because I did not know what was causing me to drink. As I could not eliminate the cause, I could not stop drinking. I was like a person suffering from hay fever who is unaware that he is allergic to golden rod, but who has developed a habit of walking through fields of golden rod—trying to keep from sneezing.

And then I came into A.A. True, I was an agnostic. I thought I was an atheist, but I knew I was licked and I was in no condition to argue or split hairs. I took the first 3 Steps with an open mind and my drinking stopped as abruptly as water stops when we shut the faucet.

When my mind started to clear, I took the 4th Step honestly and without equivocation or reservation. It was then, and only then, that I started to learn what it was that had caused me to drink. I had reached a point where I could strike at the cause. Now I could give up my senseless, futile battle against symptoms. I could start thinking along straight, integrated lines instead of in circles which invariably bring us around to the bottle.

The first 3 Steps in A.A., if taken with an open mind, will shut off anyone's drinking regardless of the circumstances. The remaining Steps, if accepted in the same manner, will teach us why we drink, how permanently to meet our problems and in addition will bring us serenity, peace of mind, and the abundant life which A.A. promises but of which so many alcoholics have despaired.—*P.M.B.*

Don't Default

From Fair Lawn, New Jersey

In serious difficulty, I sought assistance from every human agency within my reach. Applying, first to one, then the other, I made the rounds from family physician to hospitals, to clergymen, to psychiatrist, then round and round again. It seemed that although all recognized the genuine need I had for assistance, none knew or seemed to know just what assistance I so urgently sought.

It was as though I had approached these agencies with a plea for a loan and that each had said: "You have no assets to offer as collateral, you have no one to endorse your note, you have a bad reputation, we find you a poor credit risk indeed."

Then, when I had become utterly hopeless and desperate, one of those agents, a psychiatrist, told me that he knew what I was seeking. He was one of those fearless men who bring

great credit to their profession. He told me that I needed a loan and that he alone was not a strong enough agent to underwrite it. However, he did know of an agency that was big enough—kind enough—considerate enough and unselfish enough to help me. Further, I would no longer have to do the seeking, he would send their representative to me.

Shortly thereafter, a representative of Alcoholics Anonymous called on me. He explained how big his people were. Not only were they big, but they were backed by A Higher Power. I went to meet other representatives of this great agency. They proved to me that if I could furnish honesty and sincerity as collateral, there would be no further credit investigation.

They didn't care if every other agency on earth considered me a poor risk and had refused me a loan. They made it clear that, at all times, in all my dealings with them, I could negotiate directly with that Higher Power. They displayed thousands of borrowers to me. Not one had reason to complain. All had been granted more than they had asked for. They, as I, had been willing to borrow the thing that to us was the biggest loan in our lives—*sobriety!* In addition they had been granted serenity, tolerance, humility, self-respect—even love.

Of course, I wanted this loan. I begged for it. And yet, when it came time for me to turn in my collateral—*honesty* and *sincerity*—I held back. Oh, how difficult, how unhappy, how protracted I made those negotiations—to my own sorrow as well as that of the members of the agency—to say nothing of the Higher Power. Unless I saw the light, and put up my collateral, even this agency—the last resort might not negotiate with me. An agency member then told me that to avoid all the unhappiness I had created, I should get closer to and deal directly with the Higher Power.

I took my collateral to the Higher Power. Unhesitatingly He granted my loan—*sobriety!*—with the manifold beauties of life it holds for an alcoholic. Then He bade me abide by my contract with Him. I must live the 12 Steps, live them, love them. He even made me a director of that great agency, Alcoholics Anonymous, for all who have borrowed are directors; like the others, I was granted the power to make loans—with His sanction.

The negotiation seemed concluded when he reminded me of the interest clause. I was told that the loan was mine—to have and to hold—just as long as I met the interest clause. I looked over my contract carefully and there, in the concluding section of the contract, I found the clause. It is the last seven words of the last step, "*practice these principles in all our affairs.*" By the Grace of God I shall not default in my payment.—*J.L.R.*

LACK OF MONEY PROVED A.A. BOON

(Continued from Page 3)

as the first physician ever to champion our cause, had already given us measureless help and encouragement. Of course, we alcoholics were delighted. Our money troubles, we thought, were over. If money was the answer, we had surely come to the right place!

Following introductions, each alcoholic told his own personal story, these accounts being enthusiastically confirmed by our ardent friend, Dr. Silkworth. After which (with becoming reluctance!) we brought up the subject of money. As our hearers had seemed much impressed by our recovery stories, we made bold to expand on the urgent need for hospitals, "field workers" and a book. We also made it clear that this would take money—quite a lot.

Turn in Destiny

Then came one more turn in A.A. destiny. The chairman of the meeting, Albert Scott (now deceased), a man of large affairs, and profoundly spiritual in his nature, said in substance, "I am deeply moved by what I have heard. I can see that your work, thus far, has been one of great good will—one alcoholic personally helping another for the love of the thing. That is First Century Christianity in a beautiful form. But aren't you afraid that the introduction of hospitals and paid field workers might change all that? Shouldn't we be most careful *not to do anything* which might lead to a *professional or propertied* class within your ranks?"

These were great words for Alcoholics Anonymous. We alcoholics admitted their weight. Disappointed that our hope of substantial money help seemed to be fading, we confessed, nevertheless, that we had often had such misgivings. But, we persisted, what are we going to do? It has taken us three years to form three groups. We know we have a new life for those who die or go mad by thousands each year. Must our story wait while it is passed around by word of mouth only, becoming hopelessly garbled meanwhile? Finally our friends agreed that something needed to be done. But they did continue to insist our movement ought never be professionalized. This struck the keynote of our relation to these men of good will for all the years since. Rightly enough they have never secured us large sums of money. But each has given of himself to our cause, generously and continuously; how much, few A.A.s can ever know.

Seeing clearly that we must now spread the recovery message faster, they then suggested we might carefully experiment with a small rest home at Akron. This could be presided over by Dr. Bob who was, after all, a physician. Where-

upon, early in 1938, Frank A., on his own time and with expenses paid by his associates, went to Akron to investigate. He returned most enthusiastic. He was inclined to the opinion that \$30,000 ought to be invested in a center for alcoholics. Our friend, Dick R., showed Frank's report to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who at once manifested a warm interest. But Mr. Rockefeller also expressed anxiety about professionalizing us. Nevertheless, he gave us a sum which turned out to be, however, about one-sixth of the amount Frank had suggested. His gift came in the Spring of 1938 and its result, was to help Dr. Bob and me through that very trying year. We could not have actively continued without it. Yet, money wise, our budding movement of alcoholics was still left very much on its own—just where it should have been left, too, however difficult that seemed at the time. We still had no "field staff," no hospital and no book.

These were the events that led to the formation of The Alcoholic Foundation. The need for a volume describing our recovery experiences loomed larger than ever. Were such a book to appear a great flow of inquiries from alcoholics and their families might start. Thousands, maybe. These appeals would certainly have to be cleared through some sort of Central Office. That was most evident.

Everything but Money

For these saner purposes, our friends suggested the formation of a Foundation to which givers might make tax free contributions. We alcoholics endlessly discussed this new project with them, consuming hours of their business time. Frank A. and a friendly attorney, Jeff W., put much effort on the original Foundation Trust agreement. The lawyer had never seen anything like it. The new Foundation should, we insisted, have two classes of Trustees—alcoholics and non-alcoholics. But, legally speaking, what *was* an alcoholic anyhow, he queried, and if an alcoholic had stopped drinking, was he an alcoholic any more? Then, why two classes of Trustees? That, said our attorney, was unheard of. We explained that we wanted our friends with us. And besides, we urged, suppose all of us alcoholics should get drunk at once, who then would hang on to the money! Surmounting many such obstacles, The Alcoholic Foundation was finally inaugurated. It had four non-alcoholics and three alcoholic Trustees. They could appoint their own successors. It was chartered to do everything under the sun. So it had everything—except money!

(To he continued next month)

Vino Vignette:

The Blind Lead the Blind (and They Really Do) in Windsor!

Being blind drunk—if you like to get that way—has its rewards; but being blind (Period) has few, unless you go looking for them. . . . C. G., living in Detroit, did just that. Cliff, to give him a name, discovered the best way to dispose of his own ever-present problem of total blindness was to submerge it in those of others.

For over four years he has been an unofficial member of A.A., both in Windsor and in Detroit, and, although a non-alcoholic himself, it has paid him big dividends; paid off to others, too, for he has tried to carry the message wherever he could, and the other day became a sponsor.

Life, for Cliff, was pretty grim that day. The weather was depressing and the gloom in his heart matched the sodden clouds drifting across the city like mobile lead. Cliff, remembering that the Victoria Avenue Group over in Windsor was holding a meeting that night, decided to go over there, shake hands all 'round, and forget about it.

But you can't escape your troubles as easily as that. It was raining in Windsor, too. Cliff was standing at the Tunnel Intersection, waiting for the traffic lights to change, when a thick voice at his elbow asked: "Need a little help to cross the street, Mister?"

Gratefully, Cliff accepted the friendly arm the stranger offered, but before they were halfway across he knew his benefactor had just as big a problem as his own. The muscle tremors in the arm he was holding, the unsteady gait, the slurred syllables when he spoke, told all too clearly the man was drunk.

Arrived at the other side, Cliff thanked him, then said thoughtfully:

"I think you need a little help yourself, friend."

That's about all there is to this story, except that Cliff brought his "foundling" to his first A.A. meeting that night and added one more member to the Victoria Avenue Group. But what Cliff had to say about it later is a story all by itself.

"You A.A.s," he said, "have it pretty soft. When you get down in the dumps, you can go out 12th Stepping. I can't. After all, even my white cane doesn't give me the privilege of going around smelling people's breaths. That night, I guess, the Higher Power look pity on me—No, I don't guess; I *know* He did, because I went back to Detroit afterwards whistling like a lark."

For a blind man, Cliff seems to see that aspect of 12th Step work pretty well.—R.O.H.

IT'S ALL "YOU"

From Manchester, Conn.

So you're in A.A. How did you enjoy your first meeting? If you are like the majority of new members, I imagine that you are a little mixed up and probably pretty confused as to just what the score on A.A. is. Boiled down, what you need to know to get started in A.A. is very simple.

Do you know in your own heart and soul that booze has you licked? Without any sales talk from your wife or boss or neighbors? Do you want to get sober and stay sober because you and you alone have banged your head against the wall long enough and want to quit?

If you do, then A.A. is your solution. Do you still think that you can drink beer or wine only and leave the hard liquor alone? If so, don't waste your time with A.A. It has nothing for you. Go ahead and bang your skull against the wall until it really hurts. When you are finally, firmly convinced in your own mind that the booze has you licked, then A.A. will furnish you with the same tools it has furnished to thousands just like you. With them you can get started on this, the biggest, the most important, the happiest part of your life.

Let's look at the thing with simple logic. For years, during your drinking career, you have violated every principle that the normal man tries to live up to. Drunken driving, fixes, fights, banging up creditors, quarrels with wife and neighbors, loss of friends by the score are some of the black spots. You have gradually adopted a cynical attitude toward everything.

In short, the world is screwy, and you alone are sane. Well, brother, maybe you can convince the world and lick it singlehanded. But I doubt it. If you can't even lick booze, isn't it safe to assume that possibly you have been wrong in your mind all these years? Isn't it possible that booze has twisted your thinking around, so that you imagine all the wrong things that have got you down?

Just admit, for the sake of argument, that you have been wrong. Things haven't been too good lately anyway. You are pretty near on the rocks; something has to be done about your drinking. Why not quit trying to battle the whole world and go along with this A.A. program? At least give it a try for a few months.

Figure it out this way: that thousands in these United States and Canada have been in just the same spot that you are in, and have gone for this program in its entirety. They have not only remained sober, but have had a good time in the process. You can do the same. Just be man enough to admit that now you don't know all the answers. Admit that someone else knows them and that you are going to ask questions instead of giving screwy answers from now on.

A taxicab driver in Boston couldn't seem to get the A.A. program. Finally the reason dawned on him. He was still trying to run his own life, to do battle with the world. Time and time again he would get drunk, and time after time, someone smashed his teeth in. Finally he got wise to himself. He quit fighting and went along with the other fellow in the A.A. that was the solution.

You're now associated, in Alcoholics Anonymous, with one of the finest groups of regular guys in the world. It is no sissy-pants outfit. As tough as you think you are, there are a dozen guys who will not only match you but top you.

These fellows all want to help you. They are all alcoholics and because they are, they have to help you, not out of charity, but to keep themselves sober. The more time they spend with you, the less they think about their own headaches and the more they strengthen their own sobriety. Eventually you will do the same 12th Step work.

This A.A. program takes some "guts." But it's worth fighting for. And you're a damn poor man indeed if you can't promise yourself in the morning that nothing in this world can make you take a drink until the same time tomorrow morning.

I've purposely skipped talking about any spiritual angle. But as you go along in A.A. you will gradually, without any heavy thinking, come to realize more and more that there is some Power, bigger than you or A.A., or any other physical factor, giving you a hand over the tough spots.

Finally, remember that booze is not for you. Booze is not the solution to any of your problems. But A.A. is. When you are "down in the dumps," lonely or just fed up with everything, seek the A.A. boys and not the bottle. Always remember you're an alcoholic and a sick man. Above all, get it fixed in your mind: *booze is not the solution to your problem.*—V.K.

One In A Million

(Continued from Page 2)

England and who had brought the five A.A.s in London together for the first time.

Consider the odds against the meeting of this American A.A. and his British benefactor! There were only five A.A.s in the entire city; the hotel was only one of hundreds in the city of London.

A few weeks later, the man and his wife were walking along the banks of a river in England. He turned to her and said:

"I have been thinking about my friend in London. I believe I know now what the spiritual part of the program means."

THE CLIP SHEET

Excerpts from the Public Press

Middletown, Del., *Transcript*: "An estimated 420,000 women in the United States 'who drink too **much**' can be expected to 'smash up' sooner than the heavy drinkers among men, the National Health Research Bureau said. The bureau said Alcoholics Anonymous has found that women 'go to pieces' at 30, while the average man who drinks to excess 'lasts' until he is 40."

Newark, N. J., *News*: "In Russia, when a person has tarried too long with friends in a tavern, the result is likely to be the same as in capitalistic societies. At that point, if there is no disorder or violence, police authorities remove him to a sobering up station, of which there are three in Moscow. There are separate stations for men and women. When a patient arrives at the station he is undressed and given a warm bath. If simple medication is needed, he gets that, too. Then he is put to bed and allowed to sleep it off. He is not booked on a police blotter nor does he have to appear in court. When he sobers up and prepares to depart full of remorse and better intentions, he is required to pay 25 rubles, more for moral effect or as cost of the treatment than a fine. If he has not 25 rubles on him, which could often be the case after a night out, he is told to bring it around. If he fails to do so a messenger is sent to remind him."

St. Louis, Mo., *Globe-Democrat*: "Representative Taber of New York, chairman of the joint Senate-House budget committee, says it will be difficult, but 'we've got to cut back spending a lot more than the President recommended.' May we offer a formula? Alcoholics Anonymous, an organization of rehabilitated persons who often refer to themselves as drunkards who don't drink, works on the theory it's foolish to vow grandiosely never to touch another drop. The members merely promise themselves each day they won't imbibe for the next 24 hours. From experience they know even a supersot can stay on the wagon that length of time. Is it too much to suggest that each congressman greet each day with a silent personal pledge not to appropriate an avoidable dollar?"

* * *

From Sarah K., Detroit, Mich.

"Take it easy, but TAKE it."

Hope Is Born for the Hopeless Behind Doors of State Hospital

From Forest Hills, N. Y.

After having been a member of A.A. for six months and thinking I had been doing a "good job," I found myself in Creedmoor State Hospital, as the result of about six weeks' intermittent drinking. I had once again taken the "first drink." To a person with no knowledge of hospitals or mental institutions, this is a rude awakening, to say the least. To me, it was the end of my entire life, or so I thought. But A.A. had taken hold and it took just this experience to prove to me how it "works" inscrutably.

On the night before going to Creedmoor, I stood at the window of my room in Bellevue Hospital, knowing the next day I was to enter this institution and feeling crushed to earth. The despair, torture, fear were indescribable. I looked out at the moon shining on the river and thought how good the world outside was; how desolate my future looked; confinement to what I did not know, or for how long. I was terrified.

In the past early days in A.A., I thought I had given my life and my will to God, my Higher Power, but it suddenly came to me that I had done so with many reservations, even unconsciously. It was then I saw how it could never avail me. I must do this thing unreservedly. In this moment of retrospection, I made the complete renunciation of life and will, laying them before my God, asking only for physical strength to bear whatever the future held for me. Truly this was my spiritual experience in that almost instantly, a wonderful feeling of serenity such as I had never known, pervaded my soul and a great strength of spirit upheld me, so that I was ready for the trial ahead. It is indeed a trial for an alcoholic to be confined in a hospital with mental patients.

From that moment, it was evident that God did completely "take over" and from the beginning to the end of my stay at Creedmoor, it was He who guided and strengthened me, smoothed the rough paths one finds in such a place, shielded me and finally released me with peace and joy and love in my heart.

When I entered Creedmoor, I was curious to know the kind of treatment provided for alcoholics. Being in good health, I soon found out as far as I was concerned, there was no medical treatment, but that there was in this institution and had been for the past five years, an A.A. group therapy conducted by a member of the Forest Hills Group, a man who had been a patient at Creedmoor more than six years ago.

Through these long years he had been going weekly to the hospital to conduct A.A. meetings for the benefit of alcoholics committed to this institution, arranging for their release, occupation and rehabilitation afterwards. All this he had been doing in an obscure manner.

It was the only bright spot for me in all of my 126 days stay at the hospital and it gave me much to think of. The sacrifice and humility of this man stirred me as no speech from an A.A. platform ever had. I absorbed the A.A. program in Creedmoor as I had never before been able to. I learned A.A. I practiced A.A. I lived A.A. I was able to assist other alcoholics and in many cases, to assist mental patients who were there because of a drinking problem of loved ones in their homes.

In state institutions, various occupations are assigned patients as soon as they are prepared to work. I did stenographic and secretarial work in the office with the staff psychiatrists and while the approach to alcoholism on the part of the psychiatrist is far removed from the A.A. program, this A.A. group at Creedmoor has been able for more than five years to successfully carry on in perfect harmony with the hospital staff.

Alcoholics arrive in Creedmoor, broken in spirit; they are sent to A.A. meetings once a week and the majority leave Creedmoor with hope for the future for they have found A.A. They are able to rehabilitate themselves in society, find happiness for themselves and others and best of all, they do not return as a charge of the state.

The field is wide open in all state hospitals for A.A. work among alcoholics. It is a most natural thing in a mental hospital for alcoholics to find each other and to cling together. With the operation of A.A. group therapy once a week, it becomes a daily therapy where alcoholics are in close contact. The older members assist new members and to both it is a source of great comfort. In Creedmoor the alcoholics look forward to Thursday evenings as a special occasion.

Since my release, I return weekly to "lend a hand" to this man in charge of the group at Creedmoor and it is the best medicine I can think of for an alcoholic. When I reflect upon all I secure in doing this, it is not surprising that the founder of this group has more than six years of sobriety behind him, that he enjoys a way of living rich in serenity, in peace, in joy and in love.—*M.M.*

SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD IN MEMPHIS

The Southeastern Regional Conference of A.A. has been scheduled for Memphis, Tenn., September 19 and 20 with several thousand men and women from 10 states expected to attend.

Registration will begin Thursday afternoon, Sept. 18, with an informal gathering of members that evening. The program proper will require two full days. In addition to a number of inspirational and educational talks by A.A.s, plans are being made for special conferences on special topics in which there is keen interest, such as problems of group secretaries, A.A. club room management, sponsorship, hospital and public relations and others.

Families, wives, husbands or best friends may attend. Activities are being planned for them while the A.A. sessions are being conducted. More specific information on the program and rates for accommodations will be sent out by the Memphis Group in a series of bulletins. All hotels in Memphis are cooperating and reservations are already being made.

Address of the Memphis Group is P.O. Box 1364.

Golden Opportunity

Alanews, Dubuque, Iowa—"The question arises if there actually is such a person as a hopeless alcoholic. We don't think so. We don't believe any person is ever placed on this earth and destined to become burdened with an obsession which would be so strangling as to preclude any hope of recovery. It's probably axiomatic to say that despair is the only barrier to hope. If one talks to an alcoholic who is in despair—who believes there is absolutely no hope—if you meet such a man, your answer is tailor made. We believe that every man, no matter how far he may have strayed from the normal way of living or how numerous his transgressions, will some time in his life, at least once, maybe oftener, be presented with an opportunity to return to a decent way of life. The very fact that this despairing alcoholic met you—you, who are a living, visible proof of recovery—the very fact he came in contact with A.A., that he had a chance to hear about, the program and see what it actually has accomplished—all this constitutes the opportunity and the means he claimed he'd never get. Whether or not he accepts the opportunity is beside the point, but this person can never again honestly say he did not have the opportunity. It is up to us to help him realize that this is his opportunity."

GRAPEVINE GOES TO PRISON GROUPS

A nation-wide move to see that members of A.A. groups in prisons receive *The A.A. Grapevine* apparently is developing according to recent communications to the magazine office.

At least a dozen groups have subscribed to one or more copies for inmates of nearby institutions, the records show, while some are taking steps to interest other groups in such projects.

Those already listed include District of Columbia Workhouse, Occoquan, Va., Newspaper Group of Washington, D. C.; Hourst Prison Farm, Chino, Calif., Los Angeles Group; Folsom Prison, Repressa, Calif., Richmond, Calif., Group; San Quentin, Calif., Richmond, Calif., San Francisco, Oakland and Vallejo, Calif., Groups; California Institute for Women, Tehachapi, Calif., Fresno and North Hollywood, Groups; Indiana State Prison, Michigan City, Ind., Benton Harbor, Mich., and South Bend Groups; United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kans., Kansas City, Mo. Group; Federal Correctional Institute, Ashland, Ky., Ashland Group; Nevada State Prison, Carson City, Nev., Reno and Carson City Groups; Ft. Jay, New York, Bronx Groups; Wallkill Medium Security Prison, Wallkill, N. Y., Newburg, Phoenicia, South Bronx and Syracuse Central Groups; Washington State Penitentiary, Walla Walla, Wash., Seattle Groups, and District Alcoholic Clinic, Washington, D. C., Washington, D. C. Group.

Washington, D. C., A.A.s are also active in sending out letters and suggestions to other groups to start similar activities.

Cut This Out and Mail to:

P. O. Box 328

Grand Central Annex, N. Y. 17, N. Y.

Herewith \$2.50 (\$3 outside the United States) for one year's subscription to *The A.A. Grapevine* (monthly).

For additional subscriptions enclose separate sheet with name and address clearly printed. Make checks payable to *The A.A. Grapevine*.

Total Enclosed

Renewal? (please check)

PLEASE PRINT

Name

Address

Note: Subscriptions received prior to June 15 will begin with the July issue.

A.A. Digest—Excerpts

from Group Publications

Alanews, Dubuque, Ia.—"When a sports promoter sponsors a newcomer to the boxing world, he doesn't merely take his protege down to some gymnasium, introduce him to a few other leather pushers, and tell him from there on he's on his own. If he did, he'd never come up with a champion. Maybe one or the other of the old-timers will spar a few rounds with the new man, then lose interest in him. He won't learn many of the fine points of the game. After all, if the boss doesn't take any interest in him, he probably doesn't rate very high. After a few sessions the newcomer will say 'to hell with it'

News Circuit

(Continued from Page 10)

tucky metropolis is called the Fall City, presumably out of respect, for the fall guys who rent hotel beds here during the first week in May under the preposterous delusion that the beds will be slept in. However, it cannot be said that the hotel managements are not both forehanded and considerate. In one hotel, for example, there is furnished to each guest, free of charge, the local address of Alcoholics Anonymous together with the hours of its meetings and the notation. "Everybody welcome." In another *Herald Tribune* column Joe H. Palmer wrote "And a great many who do see The Derby have only a fragmentary idea of what they are looking at. It is a combined picnic, old home week, fashion show and a national reunion for all persons who have resigned from Alcoholics Anonymous." A United Press story sent out from New York says "Don Black, former big league bad boy whose escapades sent him back to the minors, was following the soda pop trail today to a comeback with the Cleveland Indians" and goes on to say that he has joined A.A.

Publications Change—*The Screwball*, publication of the Deep East Texas Group of Nacogdoches announces in a recent issue that it is "reborn" with a present circulation of about 250. It serves all groups affiliated with the Deep East Texas group. Editorial policy "will cling close to the 12 Steps." From Omaha, Nebr., it is reported that *The Twelve* has grown up and become a bi-monthly publication, being mailed on the first and fifteenth of each month. Its purpose is to give a more complete report of local and national A.A. activities, to publish excerpts from other publications and to feature articles and news from members of the Omaha groups, including those in neighboring towns and cities.

and return to his old job behind (or in front of) the bar. But that is exactly what happens in some cases when a so-called sponsor brings a potential new member in the A.A. club rooms."

Weekly, Jefferson City, Mo.—"Have you counted your blessings lately? Strike a trial balance between your condition six months before you were shot in the arm with the idea of A.A. and your present status. Who among us who know what a piker John Barleycorn can make out of 'Strangler' Lewis when it comes to getting a hold on you, can deny that we are each and every one a millionaire many times over; and by all that's holy, Uncle Sam can't tax you on that. There is also no inheritance tax when you pass it along to another who has been floundering along trying to break the 'Strangler's hold.'"

Aridity Review, Spencer, Ia.—"The thought has come to us many times that after all time does not change. Time stands still. We keep track of time, we are the ones that change and are responsible for that change. Periodic check-ups are highly recommended and are advisable whether in business or a mechanical device, whether poultry or live, stock. It seems that it behooves us alcoholics who have been out of tune for varying periods of time to keep up the personal inventory."

The Brighter Side, Waterloo, Ia.—"I would rather have people say, 'Why did you stop drinking';?' instead of 'Why don't you stop drinking?'"

The Eye Opener, Los Angeles, Cal.—"Very often The remark is made in an A.A. gathering, 'You can get out of A.A. only what you put into it.' I prefer to believe that no matter how much good I may do, it is but nothing compared to the amount of good I have received; that no matter what effort I expend on what number of people, it cannot compare with the effort in my behalf expended by every member of A.A. from the founders down to the newest beginner. To each member of A.A. I acknowledge indebtedness, an indebtedness which I can never hope to repay."

The Brighter Side, Waterloo, Ia.—"Just about the dreariest jokes in the world are the inevitable accounts of drunken husbands trying to sneak into bed without rousing their terrible-tempered wives. One concerns the wily party who paused en route to the kitchen and laboriously tied all the pots, pans and trays he could find to a rope. He then proceeded upstairs, dragging the rope behind him and muttering happily, 'She'll never hear me in all this racket.'"