

The GRAPEVINE

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

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Expenses of Speakers Pose Problem

THE problem of expenses for out-of-town A.A. speakers is being discussed by groups throughout the country, according to letters received by *The A.A. Grapevine*. The following letter—quoted in its entirety—was received on March 4:

From *New York, N. Y.*

"I wonder how other A.A.s and groups feel about payment for out-of-town speakers? This problem has come up in our group and although we solved it, we would like to get other opinion on the way we handled it.

"Our group is a relatively small one for a New York group. We therefore call on members of other groups to speak at our open meetings. Most often we ask out-of-town members to visit us and speak. The problem came up as to how we should take care of the expenses of such guest A.A. speakers.

"There was some difference of opinion about payment for speakers. Some of our members felt that we shouldn't pay a guest speaker anything. Others felt that we shouldn't pay guest speakers but that we should exchange speakers with other local groups and out-of-town groups.

"Members who didn't want to pay guest speakers anything took the position that guest speakers were doing 12th Step work and that they shouldn't expect payment for it. They felt that to pay A.A. speakers would be to commercialize A.A. Others argued that guest speakers shouldn't be paid for services but that they should be paid expenses for their hotel, food and travel.

"In the course of the discussion several members spoke of the danger of getting into the habit of either accepting or offering expense money. One member told of a group that got stuck for an out-of-town speaker's hotel bill, meals, traveling expenses, a fee for the "speech" and all of the speaker's wife's expenses, including expensive gifts to the wife. It was pointed out, however, that this case was extreme, that no sincere speaker would take advantage of a group in

this manner, and that no speaker who did would be asked again.

"Generally, the need for out-of-town speakers is more acute in smaller groups with little money. It is often a burden on the group to pay large sums for speakers. More often it is a burden on individual members who find that they are stuck for the bills.

"Our group also feels that it should not encourage a certain type of A.A. speaker who is trying "to make a good thing out of A.A." There is too much evidence, we feel, to ignore the fact that some speakers are making a good living by speaking at A.A. meetings.

"Our decision on the matter finally came down to an agreement for hotel expenses, meals and traveling costs but no fee. To avoid any embarrassment to the guest speaker or to the group, we mail the speaker his round trip, first class railroad ticket or plane ticket. We make and pay for hotel accommodations before the speaker's arrival. When the speaker arrives, we quietly slip an envelope into his hands. This envelope contains cash for incidental expenses, including meals. We entertain the speaker, of course, but



we see that he has sufficient money for meals, etc., that we don't take care of.

"If anyone has a criticism of our plan or can offer any ideas on this increasingly important subject, we would like to see them in *The A.A. Grapevine*."

Another writer, from a group in the South, fears that some A.A. speakers are "making their living" by speaking at A.A. meetings—for a price. This group believes that such "professionals" are more concerned with money than with being helpful. This group pays traveling and hotel expenses of its guest A.A. speakers but does not encourage repeat performances.

Most of the letters received agree that A.A. speakers may lose their effectiveness if they make too many speeches. They develop a professional air, a platform manner and often attempt to "put on a good show" rather than tell a story honestly and sincerely. As one letter puts it:

"Some of these 'professional' boys should remember that they are alcoholics, too. If they would do a good job they must be humble, honest and helpful. If they don't they'll get drunk themselves."

In other words, the effect on the speaker himself may be demoralizing. Unless he watches it, his popularity as a speaker may swell his ego. One member, in a letter appearing in the March issue of *The A.A. Grapevine*, even questioned the effect of applause. So far as he was concerned, he wrote that he didn't want any applause when he made a talk. He doesn't think it's consistent with humility, or with the spiritual conception held in A.A. After all, applause is not heard in church, is it?

In any event, the question of speakers and speaking seems to have created some problems which might well be discussed in *The A.A. Grapevine*.

What are your thoughts?

EDITORIAL:

On the 5th Tradition

By Bill

Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Says the old proverb, "Shoemaker, stick to thy last." Trite, yes. But very true for us of A.A. How well we need to heed the principle that it is better to do one thing supremely well than many things badly.

Because it has now become plain enough that only a recovered alcoholic can do much for a sick alcoholic, a tremendous responsibility has descended upon us all, an obligation so great that it amounts to a sacred trust. For to our kind, those who suffer alcoholism, recovery is a matter of life or death. So the society of Alcoholics Anonymous cannot, it dare not ever be diverted from its primary purpose.

Temptation to do otherwise will come aplenty. Seeing fine works afoot in the field of alcohol, we shall be sorely tempted to loan out the name and credit of Alcoholics Anonymous to them; as a movement we shall be beset to finance and endorse other causes. Should our present success continue, people will commence to assert that A.A. is a brand new way of life, maybe a new religion, capable of saving the world. We shall be told it is our bounden duty to show modern society how it ought to live.

Oh, how very attractive these projects and ideas can be! How flattering to imagine that we might be chosen to demonstrate that olden mystic promise: "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." Fantastic, you say. Yet some of our well-wishers have begun to say such things.

Fortunately most of us are convinced that these are perilous speculations, alluring ingredients of that new heady wine we are now being offered, each bottle marked "Success"!

Of this subtle vintage may we never drink too deeply. May we never forget that we live by the Grace of God—on borrowed time; that anonymity is better than acclaim; that for us as a movement poverty is better than wealth.

And may we reflect with ever deepening conviction, that we shall never be at our best except when we hew only to the primary spiritual aim of A.A.—*"That of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers alcoholism."*

Pleasures of Reading

That Winter by Merle Miller
(William Sloane Associates, \$3)

The winter of 1945, the first civilian winter for the three veterans in this story, was a time of disillusionment, a period of searching for answers and of making mistakes.

Peter, the protagonist, and his two friends and roommates Lew and Ted, were perhaps not quite typical of the average young man just let out of the army in that their problems were not primarily concerned with jobs, money or a place to live. Very typical, however, was their tough realistic outlook on life. It was no exultant "we have won a war" altitude, no wild rush to celebrate and have fun and there was not the slightest misapprehension about the futility of the whole business of war. The suffering and killing had not proved anything, never would prove anything and there was no glory in it, no achievement and no victory.

"We all drank too much that winter." Their drinking was largely centered around the more respectable bars and restaurants in Manhattan and for Peter and Lew at least, it was a pointless business. They got drunk, they went through their hangovers, and for them and the girls they drank with, there was no gaiety in it, not much satisfaction and not much remorse. They just drank.



For Ted it was different. he was an alcoholic, and in my opinion a rather poorly drawn and unauthentic one. His background was a family fortune and a neglected, loveless childhood. The war was his big moment; his experiences in the Normandy invasion, the push across France and into Germany were dramatic and in spite of a wound that made it necessary to amputate his right arm, it was his period of fulfillment. Back in New York, his motto was "the hell with everything," and his downward slide was quick and apparently not too painful. His suicide left me cold, I just didn't care about him, one way or the other.

Dick Westing, a successful writer, was also an alcoholic and a more convincing one. He and his nice but homely wife Martha are familiar to us. Martha was a real person and we don't wonder that Peter picked her out as a confidante. She understood about the girl he lost because he didn't know that he loved her until she became engaged to another man, about the job that he held because he was good at it and made money and then suddenly quit for no reason at all. He could let down the bars and show her that there was a tender side to his toughness and an idealistic side to his disillusionment. Her advise to him, an admitted cliché, was "Do what you know you must do."

There are other characters in the book, brief but startlingly clear vignettes that tell us a lot about why the men and women of this particular age group feel as they do, think as they do, and act as they do.

That Winter is a book to be read and to be kept for future reference.
—M.N., New York City.

Pros and Cons on Applause for Speakers

From New York, N. Y.

The article entitled "Applause," which was printed in the March issue of *The Grapevine*, pointed the finger at the possible bad effects of what should be no more than a friendly custom.

We'll probably always have applause at meetings, and I don't see why we shouldn't. After all, applause is a practice to which we have long been accustomed at many kinds of gatherings, events, the theater, etc., and in itself is no more than an expression of good will.

The danger in A.A., of course, is that a speaker, and particularly one who is speaking frequently, may get to listening for the applause and become more concerned with that than with saying something to help some other drunk sober up. When, this happens, the speaker starts shaping his talk for applause, and the applause becomes food for the vanity.

In my opinion, more dangerous than applause are other forms of personal tribute which are becoming quite common in A.A. For example, I have attended several meetings of late which were given over almost entirely to the celebration of some individual's anniversary, with very little time left for a discussion of the principles and practices of A.A. Here the individual is elevated above the group, and personality takes precedence over principle. Personal tribute gushes forth, in a way that could easily lead the unwary individual into thinking, once again, that he's done it all himself rather than the Power greater than himself.

Then there's the personal story appearing in the local newspaper, sometimes even accompanied by a photograph of the individual, and

more gush about how wonderful he is.

We also are seeing too much of the professional speaker who runs around addressing luncheon clubs, business groups and virtually any organization that will ask him. He presents himself as the shining example, and devotes much more verbiage to his personal triumph than to the principles of A.A.

Then there's the braying type who tells everyone he encounters that he belongs to A.A., not because he really wants to spread the story of A.A. where it will do some good but because he wants to get attention for himself.

Certainly this kind of behavior and any of these forms of personal tribute tend to inflate the ego. Even applause is too much for some to stand.

Since inflated ego was our common disease, I think we'd be wise to avoid anything that plays to it.—*T.D.*

Too Drastic

From New York, N. Y.

It seems to me that your make-up editor, who placed the A.A. slogan "*Easy Does It*" immediately after Detroit F.C.O.'s article in your March issue gave (probably by pure accident) the short answer to F.C.O.'s closing query "How about ending applause at A.A. meetings?" Such slogan, and indeed the whole of our A.A. experience, would indicate that we should "make haste slowly" before embarking on radical experiments. And, in my opinion, the elimination of applause might well change the essential nature of an A.A. meeting, because in our meetings the audience is far more important than the speaker, who is just another alcoholic who reflects in his talk not only his own experience but that of a large part of his audience. The audience feels *with* him and, when he concludes, it is only natural that they should give vent to their emotions with applause. Handcuffing an A.A. audience may kill the enthusiasm which differentiates our meetings from those of other organizations. If we do that, it may not be long before we become just another sect or cult in which there is a wide gulf separating the preacher from the "preached at."

It is true, as F.C.O. points out, that now and again an A.A. speaker misinterprets applause and gets egotistically "puffed up" but, after all, that does not happen very often and, when it does, the "self-executing" remedy in our disease is very likely to quickly correct the speaker's misunderstanding. In other words, he is very likely shortly to find himself drunk.

Turning now to the earlier portion of F.C.O.'s letter, I think it is generally agreed that we grow in the program by adjusting ourselves to conditions as we find them, rather than by trying to

change the conditions. Therefore, since applause has been an accepted part of A.A. for more than ten years, the Parkdale Group member's dilemma might better have been solved by his recognizing and accepting the fact that the applause was not for his self-gratification but rather as indicating the group's participation in the sentiments he expressed. This course appears to me considerably less egotistical than for a speaker to ask, during a talk, that when he concludes there should be no applause. After all, maybe the audience might already have decided that they would not applaud!—*J.A.D.*

Thinks Applause Helpful

From Detroit, Mich.

I just finished reading the letter from the member who would do away with applause at meetings. I don't agree, because I think applause is helpful to the speakers, especially those who may be appearing on a public platform for the first time. It's a way of telling them we're with them.—*D.H.*

Prefers No Applause

From New York, N. Y.

The article "Applause" in the March *Grapevine* is one of the best things you've ever printed.

I have done quite a bit of speaking in A.A. In the beginning, I was terribly nervous and didn't like it, but did it because it was supposed to be one way of helping other alcoholics.

But after I got over my nervousness I found I didn't mind it. Then I began to kind of enjoy it, and when I found I was getting to like the applause and the people coming around afterwards to say, "Wonderful talk," I decided I'd better cut it out.

As active alcoholics, we always were playing for applause in one form or another, or at least playing for an audience. I think applause is still pretty heady stuff.—*H.B.*

Elizabeth Bergner Stars In Play about Alcoholic

A.A.s will be interested in the opening of *Cup of Trembling*, a play adapted from Louis Paul's novel *Breakdown*. Elizabeth Bergner, well known on stage and screen, will appear in the leading role of a woman alcoholic. Opening in Boston on April 5, the play will move into New York about April 20.

Featured in the cast with Miss Bergner are Millard Mitchell, Arlene Francis, Margaret Rycherly, Hope Hampton and Beverly Bayne.

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 General Service Headquarters, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

P. O. BOX 459 IS INTERNATIONAL HUB

P.O. Box 459, just an ordinary looking Post Office box number, but into it daily flow letters postmarked all over the world. It is internationally famous because it is the address of Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Headquarters, New York City.

To many active and even ardent A.A. members, what goes on at General Service Headquarters is a mystery. Because many have inquired as to how the office functions, *The Grapevine* went snooping and found that the only mystery to the General Service Headquarters is how it operates so smoothly, so efficiently and what is most important—so personally.

The General Service Headquarters is a service center for all Alcoholics Anonymous Groups. It is directed by and is directly responsible to its Board of Trustees.

Acting as a clearing house, General Service Headquarters represents A.A. as a whole to the general public in anything of national or international nature.

It publishes and distributes A.A. literature in English and Spanish; it maintains and upholds the traditions as practiced in the groups.

Like all other A.A. groups and activities, General Service Headquarters has grown through the years. It had its beginnings in what was Bill W.'s business office over in Newark, N. J. Here Ruth H. used to answer letters and fill orders for the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. In those days, before groups had been organized in all parts of the world, many alcoholics dried up by mail. Personal answers to letters make up a great part of the functions of the General Service Headquarters.

It wasn't long before the business of A.A. drove other business out of the little office in Newark. It grew to such proportions that larger quarters were necessary. It was moved into offices on Vesey Street, in downtown New York.

The Vesey Street office was a luxury. It was really one large room but a slight partition made it seem like two rooms. Those who were in that office downtown say that in those days a traveler took his life in his hands to set foot in the door. He was immediately put to work! No visitor ever left the office without a stack of mail to be delivered to the post office!

About six years ago, Bobbie B. became general secretary, replacing Ruth H. At that time there were 100 groups in the whole of A.A. Now there are more than 2,000. Naturally the whole operation of the General Service Headquarters has increased tremendously.

In 1944 another move was necessary. The offices were moved into the present quarters at

415 Lexington Avenue, with five employees. Since then the staff has grown to 16 full time employees in the General Service Headquarters, four of whom are members of A.A.

Into the office come approximately 200 travelers each month. Many of these travelers, who through the years have built up a friendship by mail with Bobbie B. and Charlotte L. (who came to the General Service Headquarters as associate secretary, in 1946) meet for the first time these A.A. workers who before have been only signatures on letters and bulletins.

Travelers ask all sorts of questions—and get the answers—or sound suggestions based on experience of how to proceed. And much experience has piled up since the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was written in 1939. At that time there were 100 members; now there are approximately 60,000.

One of the most common questions asked is how to open a club house, or club rooms, sponsor a radio program, and bring knowledge of the A.A. program to other sick alcoholics with no money.

No one in the General Service Headquarters will tell a questioner what to do or how to do it—but she will tell what happened to other groups

under the same circumstances—she will tell of how a group got the where-with-all to open club rooms, how another started a radio program, and was successful, how and why another failed. The traveling questioner can listen to the "voice of experience" and take his choice as to what would be the most practical way to proceed with his problem.

Answering these questions personally makes up the large intangible part of the services of this headquarters. Besides requests by mail there are countless telephone calls—they may be from the executive of a large corporation who has an employee with an alcoholic problem—how can he get the man hospitalized—whom can he contact. Whoever it is or whatever the nature of the call, it is answered with understanding and personally by one of the members of the General Service Headquarters staff.

These are only a few things done at the General Headquarters. *The Grapevine* will do some more snooping to tell in detail other phases of the activities here at General Service Headquarters. For instance: Did you know that more than 2,000 letters come into the office each month? We will tell you all about the mail handling next month.

A.A. at Fort Jay

The great majority of the men now at Fort Jay, Governors Island, N. Y., are confined for offenses evolving either directly or indirectly out of alcohol. Most cases of AWOL, desertion, disorderliness in uniform, assault and battery, and numerous others can be traced directly to alcohol. Many more premeditated offenses came about as a result of the man being drunk and not knowing what he was thinking of at the time of the offense.

An A.A. group was organized there in October, 1946 and from the start has been recognized by the authorities as a valuable factor in the "rehabilitation" program. The group has had its ups and downs since the organization, but at this time it has achieved considerable stability and attracts approximately 20 members who realize that their main trouble is alcohol.

The greatest problem of the alcoholic confined at Fort Jay is the fact that liquor is very, very easy to procure and that many of the men find it very difficult to repress the desire to use it. Men working in officers' quarters, messes, and clubs continually have access to the liquor stocks if they so desire. This availability of alcohol, together with the many disappointments the prisoner is likely to receive while on the island,

couple to make the work of A.A. in many cases very difficult.

For example, the inmate possibly has been "sweating out" a parole board for two or three months. Then one day he is called over to the main office and told that his parole has been disapproved by the Department of the Army in Washington. Now what is his first reaction? It is basically this:

The inmate has been keeping "on the ball" for months on end, keeping out of trouble and possibly doing a little more than his share and then the Army shows its appreciation by disapproving his parole. He does not stop to realize that there may be some very sound reasons for denying his parole. He doesn't see all of this and the first thought that flashes into his mind is raising a little hell. Getting good and drunk. With these thoughts in mind he heads for the nearest liquor, gets all soused up, gets disciplinary punishment and probably loses some good conduct time, his trustee status and gets a transfer to a maximum security prison.

Crises come up in the confinement of every inmate. Some are saved by the fact that they are non-alcoholics, but we alcoholics do not have such immunity. This is where A.A. steps in. By living from day to day the A.A. way the inmate keeps out of trouble until the crisis is over.



Scads of suggestions are coming in on the new contest. Thanks a million! But keep 'em coming! We're going to decide soon, so get your ideas in now. Don't forget that we're giving a subscription to *The Grapevine* for the best idea. Latest suggestions: a contest on the best thing to kill a whiskey breath; a contest on the most unforgettable A.A. character.

Joe P., of the Windsor South Group, Canada, reports the following: "One night



—long before A.A.—I staggered out of a friend's house to get a package of cigarettes. When I got back all the lights were out. I was furious and more than a little drunk. Unable to open the front door, I stumbled around the side of the house, kicked in a window and fell into the basement. Groping my way up the stairs, I arrived in the kitchen and put up a yell for my friend. No answer, I put on all the lights and yelled again. No answer. In the icebox I found a pint of whiskey. With this discovery, I immediately forgave my friend and started in on the bottle. In a few minutes I noticed that I had company. It was a big, yellow cat. I found a bottle of milk in the icebox and tried to fill a large bowl for my companion. I slipped, slid and finally fell on my face. The last thing I remember was taking a slug out of the bottle. I woke up in jail! It was not until I saw the headline in the local paper, "BURGLAR FEEDS CAT" that I realized I had stumbled into the wrong house!

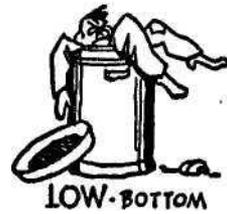
Rob. A., of a Chicago group, says that the following happened to one of his "babies": On this drunk's 27th trip to the nut house, a weary psychiatrist said to him: "Now I am going to tell you a story. When I have finished, you tell me what's wrong with it. Here it is. A drunken woman, fighting with her husband on the 35th floor of a hotel, fell out of the window and landed on the sidewalk. She was so angry with her husband that she got up and walked away without brushing her clothes." The drunk replied: "Gosh, Doc, she sure must have been awful drunk not to notice it."

A member of a group in Massachusetts reports that they are having success with a new resentment device. They have desig-

nated one end of their meeting rooms as a "pouting corner." If a member arrives at the club angry, upset or resentful, he is asked to sit in the corner! Believe it or not, it works. Our man reports that a few minutes in the pouting corner snaps most of them right out of it.

Ned M., of the Alexandria, Va., Group, tells us of a carpenter in Washington who was nailing a siding on a house and threw away every third nail. The foreman, noticing the odd behavior, came over to the man and said: "What's the big idea?" The carpenter replied: "The nails I am throwing away have heads on the wrong end." "Don't be a fool," said the foreman, "those are the ones you use on the other side of the house."

According to D.L.B., of the Goshen, Ind., Group, two of his drunken friends finally decided to end a prolonged binge. They locked themselves in a hotel room and started talking things over. During the conversation one of the drunks passed out. His pal, thinking him dead, called the house physician. "This man isn't dead," the doctor said, "Have you men been drinking much?" "About three months," the drunk answered. The doctor asked: "Did your friend see anything strange before he passed out? You know—purple elephants, funny little men or snakes?" Came the reply: "That's a funny thing, Doc, all the things you mentioned were in here but he didn't see them!"



From The Brighter Side

If you growl all day it's only natural to feel dog-tired at night.

From the Central Bulletin

Did you ever note how often a narrow mind and a wide mouth go together?

From The Alky Argot, Wisconsin State Prison:
The bellhop interrupted a noisy party in a hotel room.

"I've been sent to ask you to make less noise," the bellhop said. "The gentleman in the next room says he can't read."

"Shame on him," said one of the noisy celebrants. "I could read when I was six years old."

From The Paradox, Kansas City, Mo.:

"Hear about the Cornell grad who died of a broken neck?"

Easy does it

Or, You Can Lead a Horse . . .

From Bronxville, N. Y.

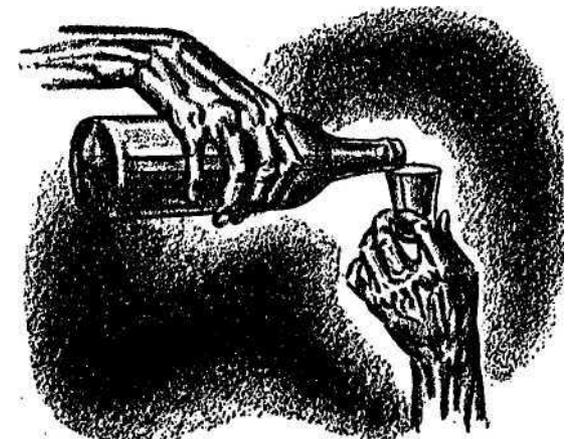
The most frustrating thing about A.A. was, until a few months ago, the fact that other drunks could not accept the Program, particularly as I presented it to them. Then I stumbled onto this from some little book I read about religion:

"Jesus counseled a selectivity when he said, 'Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not,' adding to go instead to 'the lost sheep.' Take those well prepared and disturb not the venomous. Jesus took care not to impart his teachings to those not ready for them. Those ready will give thanks, those not ready will return resentment. It is more spectacular to seek the reform of the hardened sinner, but more widespread in good to guide the children and the lost sheep."

That thought cleared up a lot for me and removed the frustration of unsuccessful 12th Step work. Obviously, every drunk is not going to respond to me or to even the most persuasive of A.A.s—because he is not ready, is venomous, will return resentment and will not give thanks. Even as I, up to a year and a half ago. So, now realizing this, I shall stop expecting to be "spectacular" in 12th Step work!—P.B.

"No, what happened?"

"He had an alcohol rubdown and tried to lick it off."



GROUP MEETING DISCUSSION PAGES

(This is a discussion page. Ideas advanced here are only suggestions, put forward to help furnish group discussion topics, without any intention of reaching fixed conclusions or dogmatic "rights" and "wrongs." All readers are invited to submit group discussion topics.)

From Washington, D. C.

What are members of A.A. thinking about spiritual growth, and about organizational and other problems, as the fellowship grows to undreamed of numbers? What are the plans for keeping the movement within workable size and proportions? How does A.A. fit into the whole pattern of its communities? And what are its responsibilities to the individual compulsive drunkard asking help?

These were among the questions canvassed in a series of seminar-forums which preceded the first annual dinner of the Middle Atlantic A.A. Region in Washington, D. C., on January 31. The coverage is by members of the Washington Newspaper A.A. Group, all veteran and seasoned writing men, and adds up to a reporter's report, held within the facts of the discussions, and reflecting no editorial or doctrinaire views except as they may have been expressed in actual statements by the participants themselves.

The value of this report, if any, must reside in the fact that it tells a realistic story (but one sharply condensed), citing the spoken words of the A.A. members who were charged with pointing up and leading the discussions. These represented some 30 groups in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

All sessions were held in the Statler Hotel and more than 1,000 persons attended. Speakers were selected by the over-all Regional Committee, and were pretty well representative of Alcoholics Anonymous in the area. The reporters were Ed S., "Doc" F., Bruce M., Harry H., Vince M., Bill B., Bill P., and Tony S., and Pete D. made the assignments. The report, unadorned with feature writing, has been held to the solid brass tacks of the participants' words. Space limitations require that it be boiled down. Therefore, overlapping or duplication in the talks has been eliminated.—*Harry H.*

In summary the report runs:

Topic: Education for New Members. Sunner P., Portsmouth, chairman; Doug H., Washington; Harry S., Baltimore; Tom L., Richmond.

Doug H.—The Washington method of classes, copied from the Minneapolis Group, has had some success. Having come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity, could change our negative thinking, we want to bring this lesson to others.

The approach to the alcoholic is a delicate

business; the 12 Steps can be distorted and misinterpreted, but once the candidate has admitted he is an alcoholic and helpless, and is willing to write out the moral inventory, he is ready for the classes—ready to go to school to learn how to stay sober.

Should one man run the classes? Certainly not. He introduces too much of his own personality. We tried 21 leaders before we found four to head them up. Some of our best A.A. speakers didn't have the teaching qualities to impart information so that it would register in the comprehension of the listeners, and it took us two years to select three of our leaders, and then several sessions were needed before they could get sharp and carry the simple lesson to the hundred or more candidates who attend each Monday night class.

Should the alcoholics, some of them still shaking, be permitted to ask questions during the class sessions? We found this was not good. Discussions? No. There will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and questions afterwards. Our leaders tell the story as well as they can; they don't try to cram it down anybody's throat, but the interpretation and the instruction is laid out cold turkey just the same, and it is a big dose of medicine.

When the candidate has completed the four classes embracing the 12 Steps he is ready to join one of the squads and in them he can ask all of the questions he wants or needs. It is in the squad, a completely closed meeting with old-timers serving as leaders, that the alkie can let their hair down, and the percentage of slips among the regular squad members is almost negligible. The squads are a vital factor in continued sobriety and A.A. growth.

Harry S.—The first weeks for the newcomer are critical; the circle hits both hypersensitivity and laxity, and constant surveillance is sometimes advisable while the candidate is faced with the need for building a new personality, one strange to our old ways. The inventory Step detects mistakes; general conduct unknowingly can become a discipline as he approaches A.A. Influential companionship is important for the candidate and this takes in the whole matter of group selection. When he finds his right group, his problem eases up notably. The sponsor should feel responsible for the newcomer . . . well past the danger point.

Tom L.—There are 50 ways to stay sober in A.A. and all are good, even if some of them don't suit me, and the beauty lies in the fact that none of these ways is wrong. You learn your way—after you learn that those verticle things you were looking through were not harp strings.

In Richmond, A.A. is represented in the Domestic Relations courts every day, and we have prospects from the Magistrates' and the Police courts also. The judges were easy, but we had a job in educating the courts otherwise. We try to make the defendant feel he is among friends; the seed is planted even if it doesn't sprout the first time. From the jails come some of our best A.A.s. Suppose we screen 300 and get one; that one is going back and get one more. Some day they are coming in. It seems that if you don't get A.A., A.A. will get you.

Summer P. opened the forum with the question, "How can we bring in alcoholics who need help?"

Topic: Hospitalization, Clinics, Information Centers. Paul H., Washington, chairman; James G., Richmond; Eileen B., Washington.

James G.—(As a state senator he introduced in the Virginia Legislature a bill to divert \$750,000 from the State's Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to establish and maintain clinics for the treatment of alcoholics.) Public health authorities have called alcoholism the nation's No. 4 tragedy; it is actually tragedy No. 1 when one considers that from five to 10 innocent persons are directly affected by each problem drinker. The ABC plan returned \$16,000,000 in revenue to the state in the last fiscal year and less than one per cent is sought for the treatment and rehabilitation of alcoholics.

The Virginia state report on inebriety recognizes the alcoholic as a sick person and a problem for the state government. Treatment of the alcoholic is a medico-psychiatric task, and since few psychiatrists devote their full time to alcoholics, the state should provide treatment at low cost and with the least disruption to families. The general concept of an alcoholic as a nuisance who should be "put away" yields slowly to the view that an alcoholic is a person requiring treatment, but progress is being made. Cost and other statistics indicate the states cannot afford not to do something about the problem of alcoholism.

(From the floor a Philadelphia member asked for copies of the proposed Virginia legislation to present to an interested group of Pennsylvania legislators.)

Paul H.—The 12th Step worker encounters many difficulties from the uninformed relatives of the alcoholic. Much time and effort is taken up in explaining to the family that (1) the alcoholic is a sick person; (2) he is worth rehabilitation, and (3) alcoholism is a public health problem. The Committee for Education on Alcoholism is doing valuable work in Washington.

A.A. has a working agreement with Gallinger Municipal Hospital and the eventual building of new hospitals in the District will bring about a constructive program on a broad scale. Facilities in the great new George Washington University Hospital, a teaching institution to be opened in April, have been ear-marked for treatment of alcoholics—as a starter. In Arlington, across the Potomac, the courts refer alcoholics to the recently opened diagnostic clinic. Congress has appropriated funds, drawn from retail liquor sales, to set up and maintain a series of clinics for alcoholics in the national capital.

Topic: Spiritual Aspects of the Program.

Tom W., Richmond, chairman; Ben L., Towson, Md.; Jim C., Silver Spring, Md.; Dave S., Arlington, Va.

Ben L.—The new member should be conditioned to accept the necessity for belief in a Power greater than ourselves, in a practical way, before he goes to his first meeting. Otherwise a groping and often cynical prospect may misconstrue a possible heavy dose of Higher Power discussion, at his first meeting, as just some more mission work, without drum, horn or free meal. . . . The A.A. member who is working with a prospect or newcomer should remember always that the latter has probably lost faith in medicine and religion. He is looking to A.A. for something different and new. A Greater Head Sponsor must be relied upon to chart the course for leading the newcomer to these new (for him) faiths and convictions which are implicit in our 12 Recovery Steps.

Jim C.—Discussion of the spiritual side is not apt to register with the newcomer until he gets over expecting a magic pill. There should be an initial and thorough exposition of the basic fact that A.A. means a new way of life, and is not a mechanical or magical process either for staying sober or learning how to drink like a normal human being. No such thing is possible, ever, for an alcoholic. It is fundamentally important to coach the newcomer in the necessity of examining the A.A. Program as a set of building specifications for a new structure of life. Then the spiritual side will come as a natural growth . . . with time.

The new member should be allowed to come to this slowly, after he has begun to understand that in none of its phases is Alcoholics Anonymous a static cure for alcoholism, nor a mechanical thingamajig inducing normal sobriety mingled with normal drinking. Don't rush the new members. Alcoholism is not new, nor is religion new, but growth in A.A. coming from sincerity of purpose and effort is a new understanding to an alcoholic.

Dave S.—A.A. is, in the main, a crystallization of common sense. We in A.A. know that alcoholism is our predominant evil. Therefore, it

becomes the common sense thing to work on all our other evils, so as to be better able to reduce the effects of the predominant one. The way to do that is to reconstruct our daily mode of life to the point where we are living right. . . .

Whether we approach A.A. from an emotional or a common sense point of view, alcoholism and screwy thinking are like the hen and the egg. It doesn't really matter which came first, the drinking or the screwy thinking. What does matter is that we start living right in a spirit of brotherly love, guided by the 12 suggested Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. These are based on the cardinal virtues and the conventional code of ethics.

The alcoholic is taking an awful chance when he gets off the path laid out by the 12 Steps. If he does not follow that suggested code, he will, being an alcoholic, find himself back in the same old rat-race of screwy thinking which leads to screwy drinking. As we grow in A.A., as our alcoholic fears dissolve, as we learn to sample the



Group Meeting

serenity of sobriety and can face each 24-hour span with confident realism, it becomes easier to picture, in transposition, a sign that is in every A.A. meeting-place: "By the Grace of God, I Am What I Am."

A question from the floor: Is it necessary in A.A. to have a religion, as long as the person involved has come to accept the fact of a Higher Power?"

The panel consensus was: It is not necessary. . . . Practice of a religious doctrine, adherence to the teachings of a sect or denomination, or particular church, are not mandatory. . . . A.A. teaches faith and willingness to turn over will and life to God, as that Power is understood by the individual alcoholic. Beyond that it does *not* presume on individual religious thought or conscience. . . . Prayer in the A.A. program will lead, step by step, to a consciousness of God; to a knowledge of how to apply this consciousness in an everyday, useful life; to an ability to draw on this consciousness as a source of inner strength.

Topic: Internal Organization and Club-room Operation. Jack W., Richmond, chairman; Ray N., Baltimore; Bob P. and Russ W., Washington.

Ray N.—Baltimore has had its ups and downs. Four or five times the group has grown to 75 or 80 members, and then slid back to 20. The growth in the last 18 months has shown a better trend with the organization of the neighborhood groups. A.A. is healthy now in Baltimore with some 250 members. The trouble started when the group grew up to around 60. Everybody knew how to spend money, and quit coming. Instead of picking up their toys and going home they went out and started the neighborhood groups, and this has worked.

Personally I know what I have been through, I know the pain and anxiety I have caused my family and, personally again, I find I have to have a balance between A.A. and its social activities. There has often been a wrong inference when a fellow says he would join the A.A. club; what he needed was to join the group. As to the club I believe everybody who drank whiskey which got him down, if he tries to keep up with the card players, is getting off on the wrong foot, and the club situation in Baltimore was a sore spot for years. A.A.'s social functions, the activities of the Alconon Club and A.A. work should be separated. Neighborhood groups are a great asset, protecting anonymity among other things.

Jack W.—The A.A. clubhouse is essential; poker can be thin ice. When a new member is holding aces back to back he may be missing some essential A.A. Alcoholics and the club are two absolutely separate items, although local conditions and group personnel have a lot to do with both of them. Every group contemplating having a club has to find out by trial and error the best rules to govern it.

Why do A.A.s have trouble meeting expenses? I suggest a weekly envelope on a voluntary yearly pledge. I don't think the club should create a separate fund unless it is for some specific purpose, like a building of its own. Too much idle money brings dissension.

Ray N. (interpolating)—We tried pledges and the like in Baltimore. The Alconon Club has the right to charge dues; in A.A., a voluntary movement, there is no such right.

Bob P.—In any internal organization we have to remember the least number of rules, the better. There is a minimum of rules governing A.A. and the Alconon Club in Washington. It is characteristic of the alcoholic that he resents controls, he is a revolutionary; if we ever work in complete unanimity we will be falling apart. We wanted something permanent for A.A. activities in Washington; we believe in social activity and we are bent on having a home.

(Continued on Page 8)

GROUP MEETING *(From Page 7)*

As to A.A. finances. When we were spending money on binges we borrowed and we hawked. Now that we are solvent, it takes much of what we earn to carry out our budgets. Whenever we reach a crisis, however, we say we need so much and the boys kick in. As to card playing, poker was barred four years ago; bridge and gin rummy are permitted in the club. Card playing members are there when a newcomer comes in, although there are some of them who don't give a hoot about the newcomer.

Another asset is found when we have a considerable number in the club. We get a lot of drifters, down-and-outers without a dime. Where only two or three are around, they have to dig down or have a fund. We have one rule, no drunk is permitted. We feel helpless because he can't understand what we say when we talk to him. During cold weather the Ninth Street boys drift in; our chairs are occupied by those who seek warmth, not the Program. Fifty-cent smoke drinkers were filling our \$69 chairs—so we hired a manager.

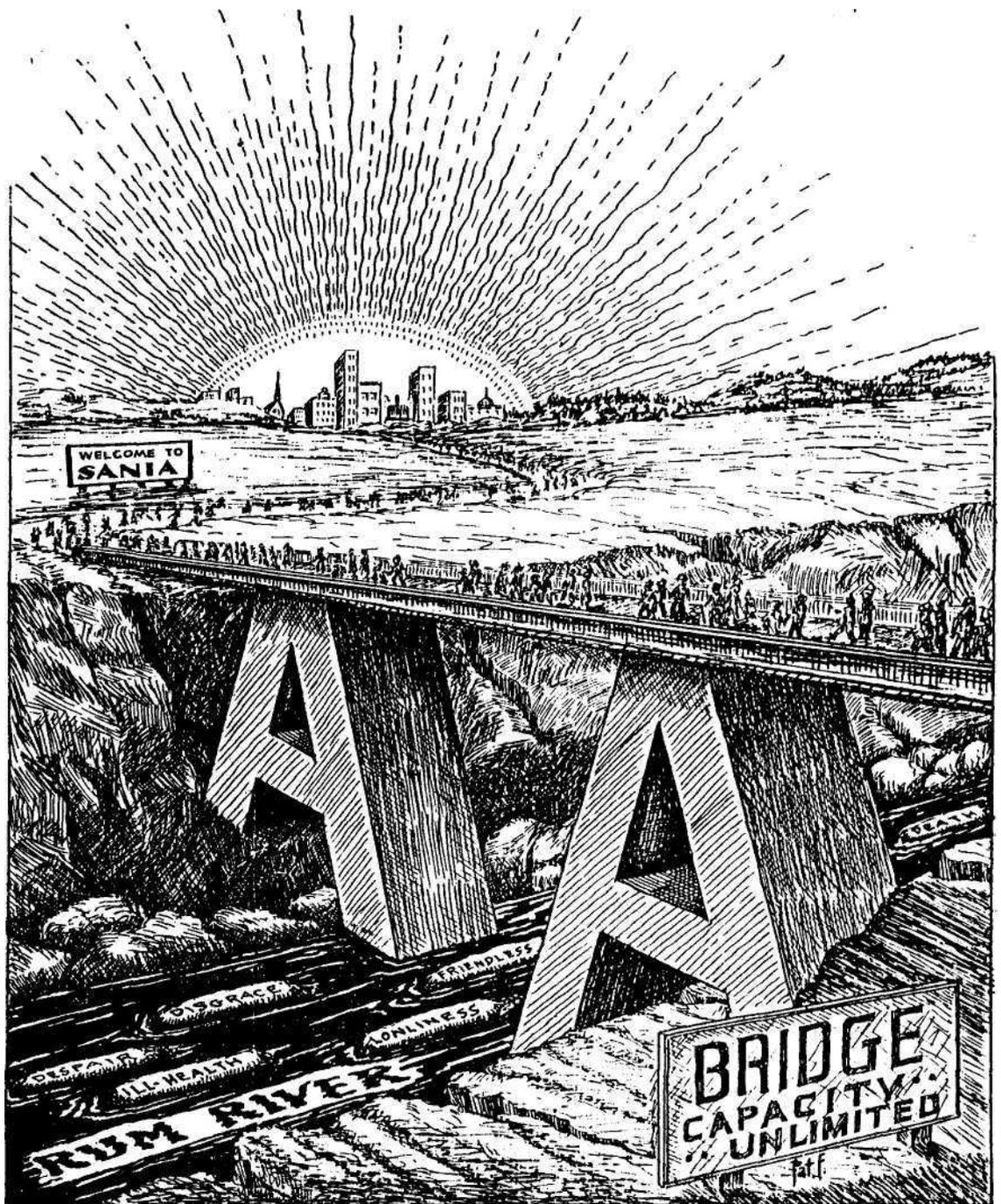
Russ W.—We have panhandling troubles, the mop and shovel squad moves in. There sometimes seems to be a question of how to keep a club after you get it. Oldtimers point out that it was a club room in which they got sober, but for the shaking, sick alcoholic coming for help the sight of a lot of men playing cards is no inviting spectacle. So here in Washington we have two floors. The A.A. rooms where anybody can come for information, where receptionists are always on duty and where the volunteer secretaries are available to talk with the candidate for sobriety or to assign one of the regulars to hear his story. Then we have the club upstairs.

We have two types of panhandlers in Washington. First there is the ordinary panhandler who says "you help drunks." He is there at 8 o'clock to get 50 cents for a bed; even the police send them up. Are they drunk? No. This fellow is sober, broke, and he'll "yes" you to death. Comes noon time. He looks hungry and somebody buys him a sandwich or two. Comes dark. He has no place to sleep. He gets 35 cents for the Mission, or 50 cents for the Volunteers.

The next morning he's right there again—and sober. We watch him for a couple days, bed him down two or three nights, then the manager, who made it through jail and knows most of them, says, "Let's talk this over." The A.A. Program means a return to normal life, he tells them, and he accents the fact that nobody is going to pay the visitor for staying sober.

Yet, on the other hand, we have the man who does make the Program, and if we take one out of a hundred it's worthwhile. Some of our finest A.A.s came out of the courts.

Then we have the other kind of panhandler,



General Structural Description of — THE A.A. BRIDGE —

FOUNDATION: Extra depth of "vast experience-rocks."

FRAME-WORK: Of Divine Steel of truest temper, welded at each joint with Faith.

FILLING: A concrete composition of time-tested material, the strongest known to man, called "Fellowship." Strongly laminated to the frame-work and foundation by a supreme desire for a better life and the will to win.

COSTS: Up to you.

TOLL: 12 Steps.

the fellow who says he has been a member of the Louisville or the Chicago group and has had a slip while visiting Washington. If A.A. will let him have, say \$10, until an answer to his telegram comes it would be a big help. He will offer you his personal check. Well, a lot of money went into those hands in the past, I imag-

ine; today we offer to prepay a telegram or a long distance call to his friends.

As to the regular floaters, after they have been around three days with no evident effort to find jobs, we tell them to go to work or to look for work.

(Continued Next Month)

WIVES ARE PEOPLE, TOO

When my husband first called for A.A. help, the boys rallied round in such force and with such avid interest that he groggily asked where had they all come from—the woodwork?

I felt the same way. It was the most wonderful relief imaginable to have someone to tell our troubles to and I know that I benefited every bit as much as my husband from those first early contacts with A.A.

All of a sudden, as I heard more, read more, talked to more members and their families, and watched my husband go to work on his own problems I came to realize that I had plenty of personality discrepancies to get over myself.

For sane and sober as we wives may seem to a guy rocking out of the jitters, we probably haven't remained entirely that way and it may be a long time before we discover how deeply alcohol has affected us, even if it hasn't passed our own lips in years or even if we can hold our own and suffer none of the horrible aftermath.

Living with an alcoholic is the closest thing to being one, I've discovered. And for that very reason, wives and husbands of A.A.s can help tremendously by grabbing hold of many of the precepts and going to work on others who have been in close contact with the disease.

Tolerance is one of A.A.'s first lessons, and yet how frequently we hear ex-drunks despairing of slippery brethren, wondering what makes them behave as they do.

Even more often, we hear the hapless wife of such a prospect criticized pretty roundly, not only by confirmed A.A.s but also by wives now enjoying comparative peace and calm.

True enough, we have all heard the experiences of others; we have heard how sometimes the most effective care of a drunk is the absent treatment; we are told that it may hasten the sobering-up process if a guy is allowed to hit bottom earlier in life and not be protected by a doting female. And it's wonderful when the wife of a drunk can profit by the experiences of others and behave in purely exemplary fashion in trying to help her husband attain sobriety.

Too many wives, though, are thinking almost as alcoholically as the patients themselves. The

THE IRISH HEAR OF AMERICA

One of the best of the St. Patrick Day stories heard hereabouts came, fittingly enough, from Dublin, Ireland.

The secretary of the Dublin Group was reading a letter from an Iowa A.A. One of the newer members of the Dublin Group listened attentively enough but with a surprised look on his face. When the secretary had finished the letter, this member asked:

"Why, have they got A.A. in America?"

wife's life has become just as much of a squirrel cage as the alky's.

She, too, trying to hide her shame and embarrassment and discouragement, has built walls around herself; has dropped friends, cut out many normal interests. I know what it is to stay indoors for two or three days, not even going to the grocery, dreading to meet anyone who might ask in a casual way, "How's your husband?" The fear of bursting out in tears, or of just looking like a damned liar, was too great. I was as bound up with remorse, feelings of failure and degradation as anyone else in our twosome.

Why didn't I leave? For the same reason that my husband kept banging his head at the stone wall of "normal drinking." I kept hoping against hope, trying to kid myself that each binge would be the last, but instead trying to have things in shape so that there would be money, job excuses, etc., if another should crop up. I tried to kid myself that going on the wagon was the way he could do it (all this before A.A.), feeling all along that something was lacking, that another drunk was inevitable, but hoping to postpone it. And not leaving when the unpleasant days did come, for scores of reasons—mostly that I never wanted to leave my husband, despite the horror of those times. I wanted too much the life I knew he wanted, that I knew we could have if we could only somehow be sober and happy at the same time.

We found the answer in A.A. But then would come periods when I would grow taut inside, nervous and irritable, and after a couple of spells, and looking back, I discovered that I was

Did You Answer? If Not, Please

We hope you filled out the reader survey questionnaire which was enclosed in the March issue of *The A.A. Grapevine*.

If you put it aside to fill out later, will you do it now—please?

Although *The Grapevine* has to have a staff to put the magazine to press each month, actually all members of A.A. are its editors. *The Grapevine* is as much a group activity as a group meeting.

So, the editors on the staff want to know the likes and dislikes, and the preferences of the editors in the field.

Please send us your survey, if you haven't already done so. If you've lost it, write us a letter and tell us which features you find most helpful. That will help us make *The Grapevine* still more representative of A.A. viewpoint and experience.

going through a periodic emotional "binge" just as habit had forced me to do over a few years. And I suddenly recognized that our minds, our bodies, get pretty used to a pattern, and we can't entirely shake off all that in a few months, much as our hearts may want to.

Alkies recognize these symptoms in each other, and try to help out during tough periods. Wives can use the same understanding, the same sympathy and tolerance from each other.

Just as talking over their problems with someone who has been through the same mill is such a vital part of A.A. for the alcoholics themselves, so is it important for the wives if they're to adjust more happily to following the Program and building side-by-side with their husbands.

New members' wives are liable to be bundles of nerves; they may shy away from contacts even more than the men do; they may never want to let it be known that their husbands weren't always perfect gentlemen and discussing their ups and downs may seem at first sacrilegious. A lot of my restraint, I found on close examination, was false pride; I didn't want it thought that my husband had ever called me a certain few undignified names because I was trying to preserve a moonlight and roses illusion for years rather than face a lot of the realities of life. It's a defense for us, of course, and one that overtakes us very subtly, but, nevertheless, if we probe around a bit, most of us can find similar basis for our actions.

A.A. is such a wonderful gift to bring to other sufferers that we are liable to concentrate all our attention on the drinker himself. That's right at the outset. But I find that the work of helping to loose a family from its bonds is much pleasanter and fuller if I try to be a friend to his wife, and show her where the Program holds every bit as much for us wives as it does for our better halves. She is probably a pretty sick person, too, and helping her get rid of some of her complexes and neuroses will help her husband put his best foot forward faster.—/T.

OVER 300 AT ANNIVERSARY

More than 300 persons attended the first anniversary meeting; of the St. Nicholas Group, New York City, held February 29 at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, West 133rd Street.

Chairman of the meeting was Jimmy S. of Washington, D. C., and the program included three non-alcoholic speakers, Congressman Adams Clayton Powell, the Rev. John Johnson, and the Rev. Sheldon Bishop.

The St. Nicholas Group, which first held its meetings at Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square in Greenwich Village but has been meeting at the uptown address for the past year, numbers approximately 40 active members.

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

Make a Decision

From Washington, D. C.

The A.A. Program is the very life line by which an alcoholic can pull himself back to a normal position in life. Don't toy with it. This is a serious matter. Insanity or an early date with the undertaker is awaiting you if you are powerless over alcohol and your life has become unmanageable. Let go and make a decision to turn your will and your life over to that Power greater than ourselves. You will have an experience that will be a revelation to you.

The newcomer who is here for the first time and who is dubious of this plan of recovery should look around. You may see someone whom you have been drunk with—someone you have met in a hospital or even someone you have been with in jail. Many of these people are working the A.A. Program. It is working for them. You, too, can work it and it will work for you—if you sincerely want sobriety more than anything else in the world.

Many men have hit bottom, all the way down, and have made a comeback by the proper application of the 12 suggested Steps in A.A. Some of these people were so near going off the deep end into obliteration that any plan or program for recovery seemed humanly impossible to them—yet by the Grace of God and the help of A.A. they are here.

The A.A. Program of recovery embodies sincerity of purpose, honesty and tolerance through practicing the principles outlined in the 12 suggested Steps in your daily life—24 hours at a time. You can and will slowly recover, regain self-respect, the respect of others and finally regain your rightful position in life, physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and spiritually. —*Bob C.*

"Ballyhoo" Viewed with Alarm

From Hoosick Falls, N.Y.

To my way of thinking you people are doing a fine job with your paper. You are sure doing the right thing for A.A. when you publish articles like the one by J.F.H. that appeared in the February issue of *The Grapevine*.

I view with some alarm the "ballyhoo" that is being made for A.A. Although nothing can hurt us, the continued effort to make A.A. a "by-word" is not good. Articles restating the plain simple purpose of A.A. as outlined in the "big book" are very good at this time. Keep up the good work!

I'm on my way to seven years of A.A. sobriety and I can and will do all I can for it because it saved me and has given me a new concept of life. —*W.O.R.*

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*

How Much Is Sobriety Worth?

From Youngstown, Ohio

What are you willing to pay for security, peace of mind—happiness? To me they are priceless. No price can be set upon them, yet I have them by simply following the A.A. Program—a joy to awaken to the dawn of each new day—to be able to have a vision above the next drink.

I have banked each day for several years, and from that bank I can draw checks for a wondrous living.

Upon reading the call for the semi-yearly subscription for the support of the New York office—and in going over the breakdown of expenses, then looking at what we subscribed on the last call I detected a malodorous situation. Here are about 50,000 of us enjoying a life such as we never knew before, and yet we are in the red—*eight grand*—snap out of it, fellows, figure it out. Your sobriety only costs you less than one-half a cent a day to maintain our New York office for a year—yet we are in the hole. Is gratitude only found in the dictionary? RALLY ROUND, BOYS—LET'S GO AND PAY FOR OUR NEW WAY OF LIFE.

It's the cheapest greatest thing you ever purchased, and you are helping the other poor bewildered soul who sends in a call for assistance, or are we going to be as we were before—all take and no put, with no gratitude to Him who has kept us sober?—*One Alky to Another*



Use the Tools

From Wichita, Kansas

It is the tools of A.A. which bring sobriety. These tools are the A.A. book, the 12 Steps, the Traditions, and the therapy expressed in group action. However, no one can stay dry by knowing only the names of the tools needed to do the job. The mere knowledge of the names of each of them is insufficient; we must learn through use and understanding the tools of our sobriety. The way is long but it is filled with the satisfaction and joy of accomplishment.

If the apprentice quits before serving his stint is he qualified to say that it is no good? That the method of learning does not work? That it doesn't work for him and therefore doesn't really work for anyone else? Look at all the finished carpenters, the first rate lawyers and doctors. The top printers, accountants and a host of other trades and professions. It is certainly true their apprenticeships worked for them though the way was undoubtedly long and rocky, and often they must have been tempted to quit. Still, despite set-backs they fought on to ultimate success. Are we, then, so different? I do not think so.

Let us not, therefore, blame A.A. if we are having difficulty with the Program. Remember that it isn't A.A. that doesn't work, it is we who have not yet learned to use the "tools" of our "trade."—*Duane S.*

Remember but Don't Brood

From Pasadena, Calif.

One of the most wasteful occupations in the world is brooding upon what cannot now be helped, while neglecting that which can be helped.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't regret past errors, nor does it mean that we shouldn't think of how we would face a similar situation if we should again meet it.

It does mean that to brood ceaselessly about that which is forever beyond recall is a shameful waste of life. It is as hazardous as to drive an automobile with eyes fixed on the rearview mirror instead of on the road ahead.

It is the road ahead that counts now. We must devote our minds to the present and the future and let the wreckage we have passed serve as a warning, not as a brooding obsession.

"It might have been," is the cry of a lost soul, but what might yet be, in spite of all past errors and mistakes, is worth living and working for. Forget what can't be helped and live for what can be helped.—*Louis A.*

Rough Draft

from Honolulu, Hawaii

1st Step: "Admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable."

We, a group of ex-drinkers, condemned to death or insanity by Judge Barleycorn, had all too long ignored the laws of decency, society and nature.

We repeatedly served various sentences for what we thought were minor offenses, such as disregard of honesty, resentment, self-pity, jealousy, criticism, intolerance, fear and anger. We always sought the easy way out by getting drunk, until we received that judge's sentence.

So, we applied for a pardon. We had hired the best attorneys our dwindling funds could afford, such as medical doctors. Never admitting to them for one minute, how much we drank (usually only two beers), until finally they turned us over to a psychiatrist, who also found our case to be hopeless.

Some of us took time out for various types of treatment at hospitals. We finally decided our families, friends, doctors and psychiatrists were right. We had to admit that our lives had become unmanageable through alcohol.

We received a parole with A.A. as the Parole Board. We, like any other parolee, must live by the Board's decision. We must report regularly three times a week to our Parole Board (A.A.).

We cannot carry concealed weapons (alcohol in our systems), we cannot and must not associate with other criminals or drunks (not to be confused with ex-drunks) and we must at all times remember what caused us to receive this sentence so that the same thing will not happen again.—Van

12 Keys to Happiness

From Bronxville, N. Y.

A.A. gives the alcoholic a ring of 12 keys which, separately, will unlock many doors hitherto closed to him—together these 12 keys will unlock every door leading to a happy, constructive, purposeful life. The keys cost nothing but a sincere desire for sobriety—the greatest bargain in history. Greater than the old free lunch, eh?—P.B.

Why Humility?

From Piedmont, Ala.

The word "humility" is often batted around in A.A. and the use of it is so constant that it must surely be important. What has it got to do with liquor drinking and where does this humility business fit into our efforts to overcome our excessive drinking?

Humility. This is no longer a word that has not been satisfactorily explained. I now have a conception of its meaning and a practical application of its use that force me to believe that we must have some degree of humility before we can become successful in our efforts to find a contented satisfactory life.

Humility is not the means whereby we become enlightened. If we have humility, we no longer say, "I can't accept that," or "That doesn't appeal to me," or "I want no part of that." Humility is the starting point. Without it we cannot accept the truth of our basic condition, or become willing to follow the practices A.A. advocates.

Humility is the means that enables us to reverse ourselves and retire from our old impossible line of thinking. It is through humility that we are enabled to learn. Humility is not the result of sobriety. It does not come as a consequence of having eliminated our drinking problem. It is through humility that we effect the needed changes.

What is humility? I have heard that it is modesty of soul. This modesty of our real being enables us to realize and accept our limitations. Knowing our limitations we become conscious of needing help. We question the infallibility of our intellect. It is the realization that we are not omnipotent, even in the process of our thinking. By virtue of humility, we can gain true knowledge of ourselves, our condition and how it can be corrected. Humility causes the collapse of our excessive ego, which I believe to be the most common and outstanding characteristic of all alcoholics. This excessive ego has caused us to worship self to such a degree that we have no place for a true recognition of the real God. This may explain our agnostic views rather than too much Sunday school.—W.H.W.

Constant Reading Great Influence

From Nelson, New Zealand

A great influence has been derived from constant reading of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, surely to us, the most remarkable book ever written. I read it at all times—before going to work, before going to sleep, while doing this or that. I have also been helped by carrying your letters around in my pocket and reading extracts from them at odd times during the day.

No one realizes better than I do that I must never underestimate my old enemy. At last, however, I can truthfully say with conviction that I have won victory over that which has been a curse to me for many years. My whole way of life and outlook is transformed.—Ray

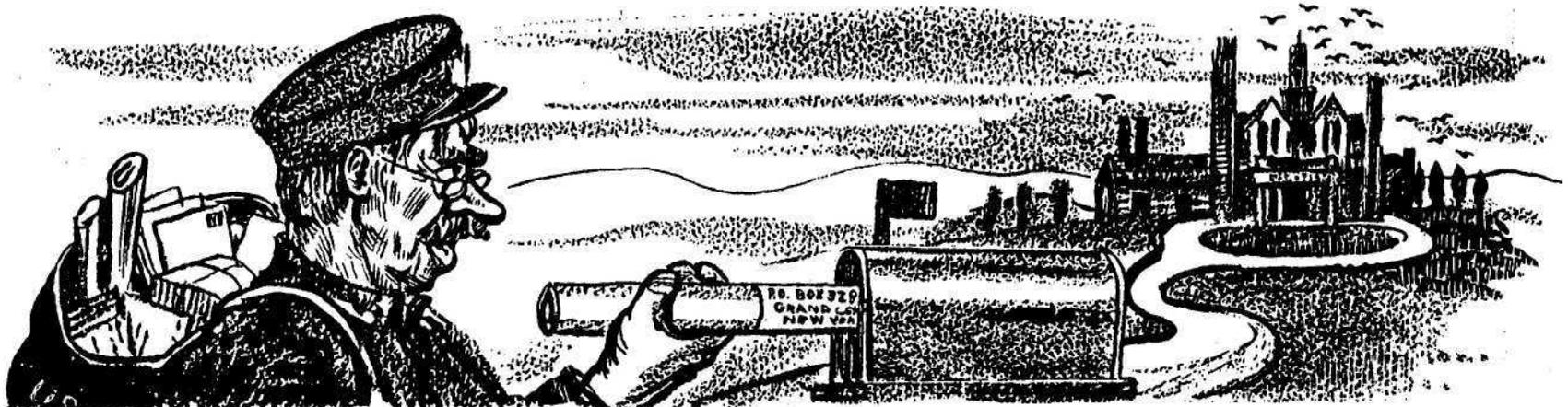
A First Birthday

From Los Angeles, Calif.

It's been just a year since I've had a drink. That in itself means much to me, for I was so full of remorse, anxiety, fears, horror of impending disaster, and despair that I wanted to stop so very desperately. And yet I didn't—if that makes sense! Alcohol had become such a part of my life that I could not separate life from drinking—they were synonymous.

So from my viewpoint of a year ago, 12 months of sobriety would not have meant life to me. But that is the point—now it does. Now I know that before that I had never really lived. Not even before I began my drinking career. But I didn't know it then; I've only just begun to realize what I'd been missing.

Each day I still remind myself that I am an alcoholic—that I am still but one drink away from a drunk, which is inevitably one step lower on the ladder towards insanity or death. No matter how many years of sobriety I may push behind me, my status will never change. Only as I follow the A.A. Program to the best of my ability, keeping our 12 Steps in mind daily, and remain in contact with others on the same Program, am I enabled to keep my thinking straight and maintain the sobriety that will mean that I may live to have other birthdays—which will be but the accumulations of more yesterdays.—C.S.



A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Convention Date Set—The third annual Texas State Conference and Southwest Convention of A.A. will be held in Austin, Texas, on June 11, 12 and 13. Tentative arrangements have been made for the attendance of Bill W., and other leaders in the field of alcoholic studies.

Hospital Care Asked—Through the efforts of members of A.A. the civic welfare committee of Toronto, Ont., has been asked to consider placing \$35,000 in the estimates to make beds available in general hospitals for the treatment of alcoholics. It is believed that 10 beds would permit a start in providing hospital treatment to assist the work of the A.A. organization in Toronto. The committee agreed to take the proposal under consideration and commended the organization for its work in the city.

Bristol Group Sets Up Fund—The Bristol, Tenn.-Va., Group has recently set up a fund to be loaned in certain cases where hospitalization is necessary.

Knickerbocker Hospital Anniversary—Under the sponsorship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Alcoholic Pavilion at Knickerbocker Hospital, New York City, was established in April, 1945, with the enthusiastic support of A. R. Munro, president of the Hospital Board.

In the three years since the inception of this service, approximately 3,100 men and women have been treated. Knickerbocker Hospital officials feel that the three-year experience in caring for alcoholics justifies the following statements:

"The alcoholic is a sick person and, in many cases, can be helped by proper medical and psychiatric treatment.

"It is quite feasible to care for such patients in a general hospital if they are properly screened before admission.

"Such a service need not interfere with other hospital services.

"It poses no great nursing problem.

"It is less expensive to operate than a general surgical or medical service.

"It lends itself readily to inclusion as a regular medical service for teaching purpose.

"It is desirable to operate such a service in close cooperation with Alcoholics Anonymous.

"It is highly worthwhile because of the number of sick people who are restored to useful and vocational life."

A Plea from Brazil—A plea for 12th Step work by mail has come to *The Grapevine* from Brazil. An A.A. member and his wife would like to have some new ideas, experiences, case histories, happy domestic situations and sponsorship procedures. Letters on these subjects would be of tremendous interest to the A.A. members in South America.

The A.A. asking for correspondence arrived in Rio de Janeiro several months ago only to find himself without the benefits of A.A. Following a logical procedure he looked around for another A.A. or a prospect. The group now numbers six.

Because of the handicap of unfamiliarity with the language the little

There's One In Every Group --

The Amateur Physician—

benign but befuddled, this type provides the paraldehyde, nembutal, seconal, benzedrine for every 12th Step case he works on. This saves him a lot of talk and trouble. The fact that he's practicing medicine without a license and may some day kill someone never seems to enter his addled head.

group feels that the transmission of experiences loses through the interpreter. It is difficult for the Brazilian members of the group to realize the scope of the A.A. organization. Letters would stimulate interest in the group and help to get across the idea that A.A. is a bond of fellowship that extends to all parts of the globe.

New Group in Federal Prison—A new A.A. group was recently formed at the Federal Prison, McNeil Island, Puget Sound. Meetings are held every Wednesday night with two members from the Tacoma Group in attendance.

Liquor has been responsible for the imprisonment of many on McNeil Island, and A.A. offers new vistas of courage, hope and security on their release. Many are attending the meetings regularly, digesting the A.A. literature and the Big Book.

These boys have an understanding friend and sympathetic counselor in the chief medical officer, who while not an alcoholic has seen the results



of A.A. throughout the country and is in complete accord with the Program.

Near Fort Lewis the state of Washington has an "Honor Farm" where prisoners are brought from Walla Walla. Many of these trustees are in A.A. and are not neglecting their weekly meetings while in this camp. Several of the Tacoma Group have attended these meetings and have found them interesting and refreshing.

Two men recently released have jobs, attend the meetings and are doing a good job as A.A. members.

A Snowbound Trek—Visions of venison, done to a turn in true Southern style, or fellowship the A.A. way, brought some 40 members, families and friends together recently in Andrews, S. C. A member of the Andrews Group opened his cabin for a venison barbecue to A.A. members from groups in the surrounding territory. The chosen evening turned out to be one of the most fiendish in years. Over icy roads and through blinding snow guests came from Columbia, 106 miles from Andrews (each way), Georgetown and Charleston. Despite the hardships, those sturdy souls from "down yonder" report a good time was had by all.

Housing Problem—From Chicago comes the report that a group of hungry A.A. members are facing a housing problem. Overcrowded conditions have occurred, says a spokesman of the group, because a simple little luncheon held in 1946 has grown, like all A.A. activities, to huge proportions. A few members started meeting for luncheon in a "Loop" department store restaurant. Soon they had outgrown one table and moved to a private dining room. At present the daily luncheon guests number more than 30 and are increasing each day. If the increase continues the diners may spill over to such an extent that they will occupy most of the main dining room! Also from the Chicago area comes the news that the Skokie Group has grown to such proportions that a split was necessary. The group also boasts of three husband and wife combinations and one mother and son.

From Honolulu, Hawaii—The Honolulu Group, like most A.A. groups, has outgrown its small home and school meeting place. Since June meetings have been held in conveniently located club rooms in downtown Honolulu. Though not lavish, the rooms are well equipped and adequate for three weekly meetings.

Monday and Friday meetings are devoted to educational study for members only, while the Wednesday meeting is for members and their wives or husbands. An outside speaker usually addresses this meeting. The first Monday evening in each month is an open meeting to which anyone interested in A.A. work is invited.

A.A. Digest—Excerpts from Group Publications

The Screwball, Nacogdoches, Texas—"Traditionally there are 13 steps to a hangman's platform, and sometimes an alcoholic winds up there because of a deed he commits while in a drunken stupor. While this statement isn't calculated to scare anyone, we would point out that there are just 12 Steps to a life full of happiness in the A.A. program."

NEW GROUPS

The following new groups reported organization to the General Service Headquarters during the month of February:

ALABAMA—Lanett.
 COLORADO—Denver (Group No. 2).
 CONNECTICUT—Bridgeport (Group No. 3), New London, Torrington.
 FLORIDA—St. Petersburg (Gulf Beaches).
 IDAHO—St. Anthony.
 ILLINOIS—Batavia, Joliet, Woodstock.
 INDIANA—Greenfield.
 IOWA—Ames, Emmetsburg, Keokuk.
 KANSAS—Abilene, Hutchinson.
 MAINE—Biddeford, Sanford.
 MASSACHUSETTS—Reading.
 MICHIGAN—Crystal Falls, Grand Rapids (Midweek Day Group), Hastings, Pontiac.
 MINNESOTA—Elbow Lake, Winona.
 MISSISSIPPI—Indianola, Natchez.
 MISSOURI—Moberly, St. Charles.
 MONTANA—Great Falls.
 NEBRASKA—Ponca.
 NEW HAMPSHIRE—East Jeffrey.
 NEW JERSEY—Burlington, Milburn, Paterson.
 NEW MEXICO—Albuquerque (Downtown).
 NEW YORK—Albany (Pine Hills), Bronx (Parkchester Group), Far Rockaway, Rochester (Group No. 19), Rockville Centre, Westvale.
 NORTH CAROLINA—Clinton, Columbia, Rockingham.
 OHIO—Akron, Minerva, New London.
 OKLAHOMA—Muskogee, Tipton.
 OREGON—Portland.
 PENNSYLVANIA—Chester, Cresson, Doylestown, Dubois, Girard, Newton, Philadelphia (Darby Group and 52nd Street Group), Pittsburgh (Mt. Lebanon Group and Young People's Group), Pottsville, Sharon.
 SOUTH CAROLINA—Charleston.
 SOUTH DAKOTA—Bereford, Gayville, Martin, Sioux Falls.
 TENNESSEE—Elizabethton.
 TEXAS—Bay City, Brady, Corrigan, Dallas, Muleshoe, Tahoka.
 UTAH—Murray.
 VERMONT—Burlington, White River.
 VIRGINIA—Richmond (South Side), Vienna, Wytheville.
 WEST VIRGINIA—Beckley (Women's Group), Wheeling.
 WISCONSIN—Delavan, Milwaukee (Metropolitan Group), Wisconsin Rapids.
 WYOMING—Elk Mountain.
 MARIANAS ISLANDS—Guam (Pomeroy Group No. 2).
 VIRGIN ISLANDS—St. Thomas.
 CANADA—British Columbia, Butedale, Lake Cowchan, Prince Rupert; Nova Scotia, Amherst; Ontario, Chatham; Quebec, St. Anne de Bellevue, Westmount; Saskatchewan, Kamack.
 FRANCE—Paris.
 MEXICO—Mexico City.

Weekly, Jefferson City, Mo.—"You will succeed better when you put the restless anxious side of affairs out of mind, and allow the restful side to live in your thoughts."

* * *

The Paradox, Kansas City, Mo.—"The passing of the 24-hour periods of sobriety dims our memory of our first night at an A.A. meeting. Whether sponsored or on our own, we should not forget the self-consciousness, bewilderment and shyness with which we surveyed the meeting and its aftermath of fellowship and refreshments.

"Some of our strongest A.A. friendships began when a member walked up to us with a smile and outstretched hand and spent a few minutes making us feel at home.

"The people now coming to meetings are no different than we were—a welcome gives them as big a lift as it gave us.

"Even though we're not natural born glad handers, we are masters of self assurance compared to the first nighter. They can easily be identified by their resemblance to our own selves on our introduction to the A.A. Program.

"Try it—it will help you, too!"

* * *

A.A. Tribune, Des Moines, Iowa—"Every night I tell my youngster a story—usually it's about how I fought the Indians—or how I sank a Jap submarine—but here's one that's the truth. It has a strong lesson for me so I thought I'd pass it on. Recently an A.A. who flies his, own plane landed in Des Moines and came right to the club. He had to fly on to Sioux Falls, S. D., on the day of our meeting, although he wanted to stay. He took off on the morning of the meeting but the control tower grounded him—too much wind velocity. That gave him the opportunity to attend our evening meeting. During the meeting I was looking over my portfolio (an old shoe box that I keep for the club correspondence) and in it I found a letter from a lady at Grundy Center—just one of those pitiful letters that we get all the time—this lady wanted us to write and have someone call on her father in Birmingham, Ala. And what do you know—the flying member who was grounded was from Birmingham, Ala. I know it's easy to say that the wind velocity that grounded the flier, thus allowing him to attend the meeting, was coincidence—BUT—I prefer to think it is something else. And, with a call that got a start like that one, I'll be willing to wager that the man will make A.A. Any takers?"

* * *

A.A. Deacon, Victoria, B. C.—"There is not a member of A.A., who is really sincere, who has not had experiences which, looked upon in the proper light, cannot help but have a lesson to teach to someone. This lesson cannot be taught—or learned—if we continue to remain silent and only listen to the other fellow. Everyone must have some sort of an opinion and idea on the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous—if he hasn't he had better get one in a hurry—and that idea or opinion will surely be of benefit to someone else. If we refuse to give these thoughts to others we are either being very selfish—and selfishness can soon return us to drinking—or we are hanging on to our original self-consciousness which is a result of the inferiority complex which originally had to do with the start of our problem, and if we continue to hang on to it and do nothing to rectify it we are very apt to be drinking again."

THE CLIPSHEET —Excerpts from the Public Press

Classified Directory

Alliance, Neb., Times & Herald: Worn and haggard police officers who wonder what will happen next on Saturday nights will be very much interested in a classification of drunks as outlined by a New Jersey police chief some time ago.

Police have met most of the following engaging characters and if not, they will be glad to be on the lookout for the types they haven't yet had the displeasure to meet.

Here are the different classifications of persons who have swilled too much C2-H5-OH in one form or another:

Alias Joe Louis

1. The fighting drunk—gets nasty after a few drinks and wants to fight anyone he sees, male or female.

2. The religious drunk—heads for the nearest church and drops off to sleep. (This species is comparatively rare in Alliance.)

3. The leaning drunk—is reluctant to move and wants to lean on the nearest upright solid substance, whether it is the policeman, a fellow pedestrian, lamp post or a plain wall.

4. The crying drunk—this obnoxious person carries a good part of the community's alcohol in his system and a large part of the woes of the world on his heaving shoulders.

"Unsweet Adeline"

5. The singing drunk—here's the person who after a few bottles or drinks is convinced he can make Tibbett look and sound like a chump. Flats where he should sharp.

6. The suspicious drunk—he's convinced that the police or his companions or both, are trying to railroad him into some asylum or jail, where he rightly should be, by the way.

7. The wife-beating drunk—this character is usually a small man mentally and physically and would not engage in a fight with a 7-year-old boy without the false courage of a bottle. When he drinks he wants to lambaste somebody, usually his ever-suffering wife.

8. The running drunk—this guy is always in a hurry. He goes crabwise down the street, usually in search of another shot.

The Big Gesture

9. The generous drunk—this slaphappy person is tighter than Jack Benny with a nickel until he drinks too much and then he makes a fool of himself by going around waving fistfulls of bills at everybody. It's usually the money to pay off an old telephone bill.

10. The loving drunk—he always wants to kiss every woman in sight except his own wife.

11. The talking drunk—tells interminable stories, invariably about himself. None of the yarns has any point or interest.

12. The important drunk—this is the person who wants to dominate everybody around him and who is filled with yarns about all the big shots he knows.

This unsavory crew are all well known to most policemen. The average citizen meets them once in a while. They make up 12 good arguments for Alcoholics Anonymous. Because they aren't.

VA Recommends A.A.

Newsweek: Even the harassed doctors, long used to sobering up lost-week-end revelers, had never seen anything like it. From Friday to Monday, drunken veterans reeled into Veterans Administration hospitals demanding the cure. Of the thousands who applied, about 10,000 veterans were treated for alcoholism in 1947, as compared with 6,459 in 1946 and 3,529 in 1945.

Although tests showed that almost none of the alcoholics had service-connected disabilities or appeared to be suffering from alcoholism because of service connections, alarmed relatives, energetic local politicians, and veterans' organizations insisted that they be cared for in the already overcrowded VA hospitals.

Boozers: In exasperation, authorities finally made a nationwide survey among the VA hospitals. Last week Dr. Harvey Tompkins, assistant chief of the neuro-psychiatric division, gave *Newsweek* these facts:

Two thirds of the veteran cases are "pure, uncomplicated alcoholism," with no evidence of mental illness. The others have accompanying mental or emotional ailments ranging from manic-depressive psychoses to less serious psychoneuroses. More than 10 per cent of all VA neuropsychiatric cases are alcoholics. (Inexplicably, the Southeast and Southwest account for more than half the alcoholic patients.)

The Veterans Administration has no specific treatment for alcoholism. In some instances it takes weeks, and in others months or years, to curb the craving for drink. VA doctors have tried insulin injections, forced vomiting to make the men "rum-sick," and group psychotherapy—but with very little success.

In some hospitals, Dr. Tompkins said, "as few as 10 per cent of the patients show themselves amenable to treatment at all." The great majority entering the hospital with uncomplicated alcoholism merely stay long enough to sober up and then demand release.

A.A. Aid: For the veteran who wants to recover, VA doctors recommend Alcoholics Anonymous help as the best course. Nearly all VA

institutions have made a working arrangement with this group, providing space in the hospitals for A.A. meetings and personal interviews with the patients. In turn, many cured veterans become A.A. crusaders and work in the wards on new cases.

Night Club Now A.A.

Des Moines, Iowa, Register: Babe's nightclub in downtown Des Moines, under padlock as a liquor nuisance since Oct. 29, was taken over Wednesday by the Des Moines chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous as a clubroom.

District Judge Loy Ladd, who had ordered the place padlocked, required the A.A. group to post a bond guaranteeing that no liquor will be brought on the premises.

"I am granting this application because I feel that this particular group (Alcoholics Anonymous) is one of the best organizations for suppression of intemperance in existence today," Judge Ladd said.

"In Des Moines they have proven themselves successful in curbing and curing alcoholics," he said.

Sentenced to A.A.

Westport, Conn., Herald: A sentence was imposed in Town Court this week by Judge Leo Nevas that deserves more than local attention.

A chronic alcoholic who is a solitary drinker was before the bench. Such cases have been there before, leaving the judge and prosecutor worried because the state has no hospital to which the habitual drunkard can be sent for treatment. Although medicine and jurisprudence are today looking upon these cases as sick people rather than as only inebriates, nothing official has been done to cure them.

The court cannot overlook the offenses when the drinkers become public nuisances, which the case of this week definitely is. But fines do no good and jail sentences too often aggravate the mental illness which makes a man or woman a drunkard. What can the court do?

Judge Nevas decided. He imposed a jail sentence but suspended it on certain conditions. These conditions are what make his decision important.

The drunkard, he ordered, must once more become a member of Alcoholic Anonymous. She must report to the Yale Clinic for treatment. She must keep in close contact with her own physician. She must report to the probation officer weekly. Should she fail to do these things she must go to jail even though Judge Nevas knows well that a term there will do her no good unless it should frighten her to do the things he has ordered.

12th STEP OBLIGATIONS

This sentence was imposed in the hope that the woman wants to help herself. If she doesn't, none of the suggestions will help. Alcoholics Anonymous, with its increasing record of aid to drinkers, can accomplish nothing without the determined cooperation of the patient. It is unlikely that the Yale Clinic can help those who refuse to help themselves.

Judge Nevas, however, was willing to believe the woman's insistence that she did not want to drink and would do anything to stop the habit. If she really means that, the clinic will probably turn her back to society completely cured.

This is a little court but into it can come problems of great importance, and this was one of them. Other courts might well emulate the example set by Judge Nevas. Other courts, too, might well watch how this case turns out. It should be of interest to everyone.

And the case plus the decision emphasizes anew the need for a state-operated clinic in Fairfield County set up properly for the treatment of habitual drunkards. There seems to be no other way to help them.

"De-Smartize" Drink

Boston, Mass., *Boston University News*:

"Our culture is too tolerant of drunkards of either sex," claims Dr. Herbert D. Lamson, Professor of Sociology.

Commenting on the proposed Massachusetts law to control the sale of alcoholics to women "barflies," Dr. Lamson argues that "the alcoholic problem should be controlled for both sexes. A law which differentiates cannot be a far-reaching measure nor can it touch the basic problem."

"We must 'de-smartize' the drink. We have been sold a bill of goods that it's smart to consume liquor by persons who have profit motive at stake. Profits in the industry are great," continued the sociology expert. "Alcoholism plays a great role in family disintegration, and society must face its abuses."

As an alternative program to laws, Prof. Lamson suggests preventive methods. Alcoholics Anonymous is now in the first stages of the curative method, but a preventive approach must be begun in schools with health and alcoholic education, commencing in the grade school and varying at different school levels.

"We must have institutions for alcoholics, and not throw them in jail. Jail isn't helping them solve their problem," says the doctor. "Provide recreational facilities, hobby centers, and athletic contests as outlets for escape," concludes Dr. Lamson, "and it will do more than any patch-work laws can possibly do."

From Indianapolis, Ind.

In the light of our first inventory we all made some unpleasant discoveries.

A great many of us came to A.A. practically without hope, overwhelmed by a feeling of internal inadequacy to meet external strains. We had never been deeply and strongly organized within. We had not the moral or spiritual backlog to provide us with an inner strength against the gradually worsening situation. And we did not know where or how to find that inner strength.

Something like intellectual and moral paralysis had set in. And we found, after the smoke had cleared somewhat, that we had not been building anything, or even thinking of building anything, over the years, but had been steadily tearing down. Consciously or not, we had been destroying instead of constructing.

Those of us who were able to grasp the significance of the trend realized that we needed to be taken apart and put together again, this time on another principle. . . . We needed the resource of inner strength that would make for endurance. . . . Deep, spiritual strength was needed to endure the trying experiences of life, and preserve for us an unembittered equanimity. The vital transforming spark or key to this new inner strength, many of us found, not too willingly, was God—God whom we had been too selfishly preoccupied to consider seriously.

God, or the acceptance of God or a Higher Power, proved to be for us a great and depend-

Have We Got Elephantitis?

From New York, N. Y.

After reading the news items about some of the groups throughout the country, I get the feeling that this is one great big circus, and getting bigger.

We have bigger and bigger meetings, bigger and bigger banquets, bigger and bigger clubhouses, more and more publicity, louder and louder radio programs, more and more organization, stuffier and stuffier committees, and less and less anonymity.

If it's numbers and bigness we want, why not hire a barker, give him a big megaphone and set him out front, with a hula dancer on the platform with him?

What's become of the old idea of sitting down with an alcoholic and talking over his problem quietly, intimately and confidentially? That's how A.A. began. That's how the real A.A. still works.

Or have we got elephantitis?—*D.T.*

able source of daily power.

Let us look at another phase of A.A.

We're all here with a common purpose—the pursuit of a happy, useful life. We have come here to find ourselves. And while we have only begun to learn to distinguish the true from the false, most of us, I believe, have been set upon the right track. We have begun to see and act with clearer vision and to proceed along the new course with reborn assurance.

Meanwhile we are absorbing the benefits of A.A. fellowship. The originators of this movement, recognizing the need for sharing our experiences with other similar gropers, have emphasized the remarkable therapy of this association. Great healing properties are inherent in frank discussions of the common problem. Wounds inflicted upon us by alcohol, which have been allowed to fester and grow malignantly within us, are partially drained by honest, unreserved admissions to those who can understand. And in the process of reciting our individual troubles, we find ourselves listening sympathetically to those of our companions. There is an unburdening of loneliness, without the usual barriers and prejudices.

The subject of admission or mutual confession brings me inevitably to the 12 Steps. For me, as indeed for most of us, the Steps have designed a new pattern of living. They have given me a new way of looking at life.

A fellow unfortunate may be desperately in need of the same "medicine" that saved you and me. It is quite possible that you or I may be the "appointed" one—perhaps the only one from whose hand the sufferer will take the medicine. Surely he would be an unfeeling fool who would say, "I will not take the responsibility."

I contend that the members of this illustrious fellowship have an obligation before God—an obligation to use the particular talents He has given us for the salvation of other alcoholics. The fact that we are alcoholics who have been vouchsafed a new life offers us an open-door opportunity to help where a non-alcoholic samaritan finds himself persona non grata. In a very definite sense we are singularly blessed with a gift for helping others. And we would indeed be wasting our time if we failed to propagate the truth (as we have discovered it) that some needy one might grasp and apply it to his or her own life.

Those of us who have organized our lives according to the A.A. pattern, have found the new ways and modes easier and more habitual with the passing of the years, and our lives ever more strongly integrated. We have been transformed by the renewing of our minds and our spirits.—*H.W.*



(Ol' John's Juice)

No doubt you've heard about the fellow who walked into a saloon optimistically and came out misty optically.

And have you heard what one cigaret said to another?

"I hope I don't get lit tonight and make an ash of myself."

Somebody has invented a new game for alcoholics. It is called "Blackout" and takes four people to play it.

Each of the four is supplied with a quart of whisky and all go into a room which can be darkened completely. Make it inky black. Then each drinks his quart until each has just one drink left in his bottle.

At this point one of the four goes out of the room and the other three sit around and see if they can figure out who's left.

A certain fellow was an alcoholic but also a very good golfer. In this particular tournament, he ended up in a tie with one of the country's leading amateurs. The play-off was set for the next day, but the alky had to do a little celebrating the night before, anyway. So he started

out with a terrible hangover—the shakes and jiggles, blurred vision and sweats. But by super-human effort he kept in the running and the two came up to the final hole. If the alky could sink a 20-foot putt, he'd win the match.

The tension was terrific. His nerves were screaming. He shook himself, took a deep breath and lined up the shot. Taking his stance, he was about to stroke the ball when a black, shaggy dog ran onto the green and right between the alky's legs. The alky nearly collapsed. But again he somehow collected himself, sank the putt and won the match.

In the locker room afterwards, a friend came up and said, "That was the greatest exhibition of nerve I ever saw. When that dog ran between your legs I thought you were done for."

The alky looked surprised. "Good grief. Was that a *real* dog?"

MUSINGS FROM THE BACKBAR

My friend Joe, who had been on the telephone, cradled the instrument and drummed his fingers on the desk.

"Can you imagine a guy," he said with a touch of disgust in his voice, "who's desperately sick with tuberculosis getting up and leaving the sanitarium after a couple of months simply because the cure isn't fast enough? And furthermore, because he doesn't fully understand what they're trying to do to cure him?"

I opined that it was slightly beyond my imagination, wondering who was wandering around on a cold, blustery day with a prime case of T.B.

Joe motioned toward the phone. "That was Paul R.," he said. "He tells me that Doc M— has suddenly been taken drunk. How long has the worthy doctor been in the group?"

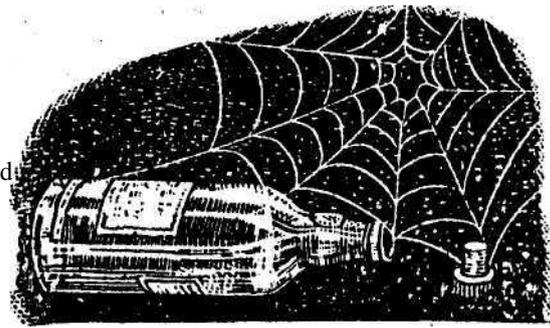
I thought back. "About two months," I guessed.

"Just what I thought. Paul picked him up last night and the only explanation he had was that he couldn't get the hang of the Program."

"Is Doc your imaginary T.B. case?" I wanted to know.

"Well, it's as good a comparison as any I know."

Joe did a bit of figuring on a scratch pad. "As I make it," he said looking up, "Doc spent about seven years in college—pre-medical and medical schools. Then he put in two years as an intern. Then say he spent five years building up a practice, before he started knocking it down again by boozing. That adds up to about fourteen years.



From The Alky Argot

It was the first train ride for the two hillbillies. They wandered into the clubcar and cautiously ordered one bottle of beer between them. As one of them took a drink, the train entered a tunnel. He spoke to his friend in the darkness:

"Have you had a drink yet?"

"Nope, why?"

"Don't touch it. I just took one and I'm blind."

* * *

From The Twelve Stepper, Omaha, Nebr.:

Whistler's Mother has switched to Calvert—because it makes her sit tighter.

"He can go along patiently for fourteen years learning to be a doctor, but he quits after two months when he tries to learn something of a dammed sight more importance to him now than a knowledge of medicine.

"It just doesn't make sense!"

Nor did it make sense to me. We come into A.A. and find after a month or two we still have a longing for whisky. What, two months and I still want a drink? To hell with it! This "cure" can't be any good. Never for a minute remembering that we didn't acquire that longing for whisky in a couple of months.

Or at the end of a couple of months we suddenly decide that we don't understand the Program. Again, to hell with it! And yet this same gent spent six years learning the printer's trade; or three or four years learning to be a butcher; or six years in law school learning to be an attorney—or pick your own racket.

We marvel at the technique of a Jascha Heifetz and speculate on the size of the check he'll receive for his concert. The check will be a whopper. But we don't think of the years and years Heifetz spent on dreary finger exercises trying to acquire the technique that pays him off.

Just for fun some time, read Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* and then read his *Kingsblood Royal* or another of his recent books. You won't believe the same man wrote them both, so comparatively amateurish is the former. Or compare Beethoven's First Symphony with his Ninth. You'll get the same reaction.

And what is the difference between the early and late works? Simply maturity gained by practice.

We know very little about Christ in the period between his boyhood and the time he burst forth upon a world with the finest philosophy ever to be evolved. Do you think that the Master picked that philosophy out of thin air as he went along? Do you think the Sermon on the Mount was entirely extemporaneous? If we knew the truth I dare say it was that Christ built up that philosophy during the course of twenty-odd years by study, prayer, and observation.

Let's not be so impatient.

I have been sober in A.A. for approximately 2,500 days—remember, we DO have a day-by-day plan. If I had learned one single thing about A.A. every day, I'd be a walking encyclopedia by this time, and fellows like Bill and Doc would be ambulating libraries.

You'll give your wife a three-month trial before filing for divorce. How about giving A.A. a similar chance? It will grow on you just as your wife has.—E.W.