

January 1952

1951 — A GRAPEVINE
NEWS SUMMARY

MILESTONES FOR MILLIONS WHO DO NOT YET KNOW....

THIS was a year of hope and help from an awakening lay public for the alcoholic. The calendar year that has just closed contained momentous news about alcoholism for non-alcoholics. And for Alcoholics Anonymous, 1951 was a year of growth in stature, in numbers present and accounted for.

Inside AA, the box score as of the old year's closing was:

Total Membership	130,000
Total AA groups	4,480
Groups in hospitals	112
Groups in prisons	79
Other Countries with AA	38

Inside AA, the year's outstanding developments included assets of inventory ranging from the Lasker Award and the first General Service Conference to the final bit of business just before midnight, December 31st, 1951... a Twelfth Step call made by a total of two AAs from one group to one person who did not yet know ...

Inside AA, the group and state selection of delegates to the first panel of the General Service Conference was a milestone in orderliness and inenthusiasm in a com-

mon course of action. It was the emergence from areas of conflict over affairs within groups to an area of constructive concern over an entire fellowship and its future.

Outside AA, 1951 was a year of light ... of probing new rays from many searchlights into the darkness of people, those friends and relatives and employees and the public spectacles, "who drink too much."

In the medical field there were new beams exploring the dark. A special subcommittee of the American Medical Association issued, in June, a first general statement to physicians accepting responsibility of the problems of alcoholism. In September, 1951, doctors of medicine and psychiatry from six nations, as an intergovernmental health agency of the United Nations, issued their joint report on "recognition of alcoholism as a public health problem."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Antabuse for general use by American physicians, limiting it to sale by prescription only. A United Press report tersely remarked "Antabuse,

alone, is no 'cure'". The National Research Council assigned U.S. government grants for a two-year study of the problems of alcohol. Reports in 1951 included an announcement of direct physical tie-in between emotions and alcohol as discovered by Dr. Oskar Diethelm of Payne-Whitney Psychiatric Clinic in New York. A Research Council project at the University of Texas suspects that alcoholics have inborn deficiencies in body chemistry. Most medical workers went on believing that Dr. Roger Williams' vitamin treatment gets at the effect, rather than the cause of alcoholism. Cortical hormones—ACTH, cortisone and adrenal cortical extract (ACE) showed promise in preventing delirium tremens, but no new effectiveness in rehabilitating the chronic alcoholic.

Last year marked new steps by legislative bodies and new legal concepts that alcoholism, the disease, needed arresting and that funds used to arrest and jail alcoholics might be used more profitably. By year's end, 39 states had legalized centers for information and rehabilitation. The dry state of Mississippi opened a \$750,000, 200-bed, alcoholic ward.

Industry saw many more plants setting up special programs to reclaim alcoholic workers and aid the manpower shortage by cutting down absenteeism from "Monday morning colds." One county in an eastern state made news when every

general hospital within the county began to accept patients on the diagnosis "chronic alcoholism." In Buffalo, New York, the Blue Cross decided to continue payments for all admissions of alcoholics.

There were debuts in 1951 of new mutual help societies using the word "anonymous." Organizational progress was announced by "Gamblers Anonymous" and a Chicago meeting of "Divorcees Anonymous" proclaimed chapters in six cities.

In November, 1951, in the midst of world strife, Bruce Barton suggested a more serious society. Pointing to the recovery of an alcoholic friend through AA, Barton wrote in his daily column: "Human nature is pretty much the same, whether in men or in nations. I just wonder if the way out for Europe isn't for its people to enroll themselves in Europeans Anonymous."

It was a year of widened education, broadened horizons for so many. AA looked on the passing scene outside . . . but with a new year beginning, the first of the Twelve Traditions and its emphasis on growth within AA took on new meaning . . . "our common welfare should come first."

While even church bodies asked AA if its program would work "to aid and comfort non-drinkers," one old timer in AA gave 1951 a short valedictory.

"We don't save souls," he said. "AA just wrings them out!"