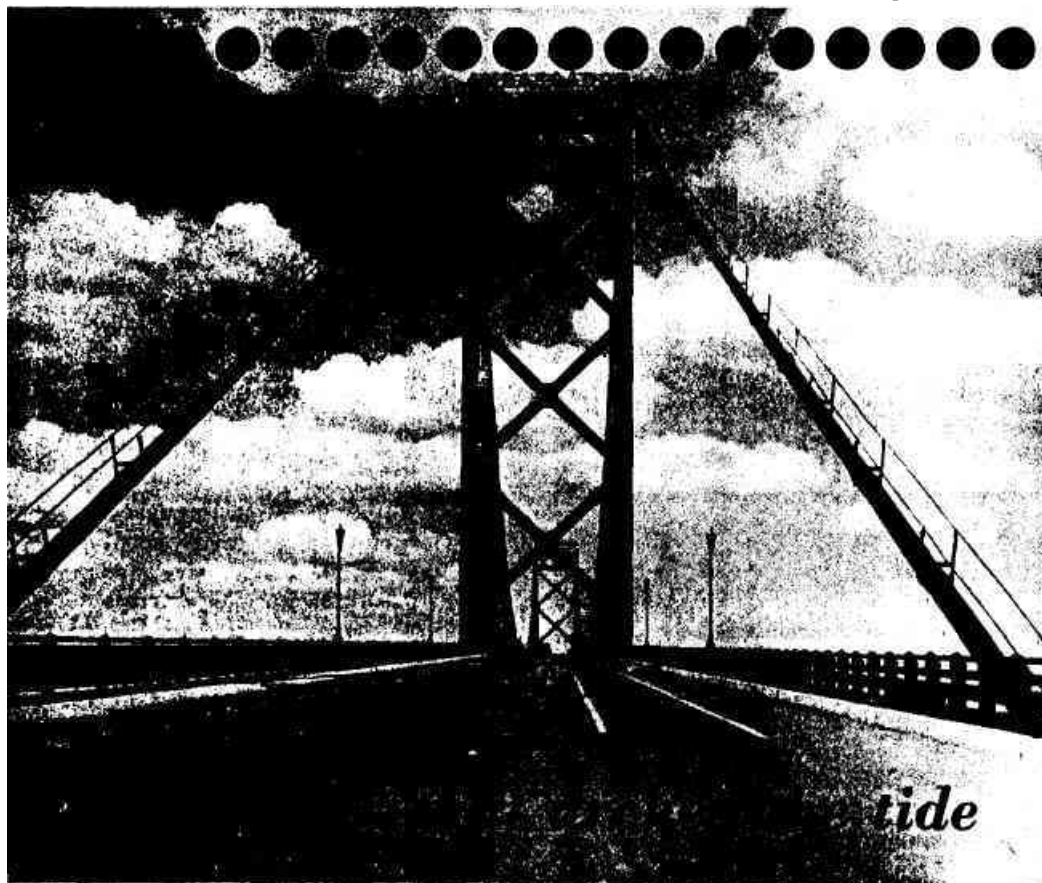


May 1951--Windsor

Ontario

Now, westward to Canada's greatest population... as a nation, and in AA. One hundred and twenty-six groups, 33 in Toronto alone. And what's in a name? Perhaps AA meaning in Port Hope Group, or Kincerdine's Blue Water Group.

And in this midland of the Dominion there is Midland Group, and Niagara Falls' Rainbow Group and and Port Arthur's Thunder Bay Group. Here in Canada's rich farmland there is immense AA growth..



WINDSOR faces north across the Detroit River. Yes, *north*, for this border city lies due south of Detroit. It seems that some 250 years ago the Yanks took over that part of Canada and nobody's ever

been able to make them budge since. So here we Windsorites are, geographical misfits, and nothing we can do about it.

Not that we'd want to, of course. Actually, we ought to be grateful:

Detroit, having become the greatest automotive centre in the world, has made Windsor the greatest automotive centre in the British Commonwealth. But there is a still better reason why Windsor AAs in particular wouldn't want to turn back the clock: Detroit and Windsor have become the *first* truly international AA fellowship anywhere in the world. So far as *we* are concerned, there is *no* international boundary.

Windsor is the most southerly city in Canada. It's a cozy little place; friendly, too. People from nearly every country in Europe have found refuge here from persecution and fear, and all races and creeds live together here in harmony. This border city has always held out open arms to all races — as witness the flight here of "Uncle Tom" — and it is bilingual. It is also a grand spot for a binge: contrasted with Detroit's stingy 32-ouncers, Canadian quarts hold a full forty!

Not that we should brag. Like AA itself, Windsor AA had very humble beginnings. Back in 1943, a local drunk got tired of getting drunk and honestly wanted to do

Sometimes they couldn't even get started until the bunch arrived from Detroit, they were that small. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on this international aspect of AA here. It is the very foundation upon which Windsor AA something about it. He contacted Detroit AA. He went, saw, and listened — and brought AA back to Canada. It was just as simple as that.

Three months later there were two AAs here. These, in turn, carried the message to a third. The Norton Palmer, biggest hotel in town, gave them rent-free quarters in which to hold their meetings, and they were on their way.

From Windsor the message spread to Leamington, Wallaceburg, Tilbury, Chatham, Kingsville, and almost every other town and city in Southwestern Ontario — all of which are now affiliated with Detroit through a representative on the recently formed District Committee (of the General Service Conference) which will act for all Southwestern Ontario and Southeast Michigan. But this is anticipating — let's get back to the Norton Palmer.

The first meeting there registered another first: It was postponed two weeks while one of the originals went on his honeymoon. Luckily, he returned sober, so the meeting was a complete success. But some of those early meetings must have been pretty pathetic.



It gave Windsor AAs the daily meetings they needed for their sobriety — meetings which were not available anywhere in our city at that time. And it gave the local group the courage to carry on, knowing that mighty Detroit itself had stemmed from the same one-man toe-hold as themselves.

Happily those days are gone forever. There is a meeting every night in the week in Windsor nowadays and, in addition, a monthly inter-group meeting. Windsor AAs make little journeys to the outlying groups hereabouts, and these same groups come here. For example, a few days ago a busload made a pilgrimage to Birmingham, Michigan, and two weeks hence another busload will be on its way here — speaker and all — from Leamington, to take charge of the monthly meeting. We get speakers from as far away as Chicago and New York, and once in a while one of our own speakers wanders away to Cleveland, Toronto, or

Indianapolis, to give a talk.

Windsor AA has a telephone — 2-3842 — with 24-hour switchboard service. It is listed merely as *Alcoholics Anonymous* — no address, no further information. It is doing a good job and has started many a local alcoholic on the road back to sobriety. We also have a coffee shop. It has quite a history.

Back there in 1943 Woolworth's was the only coffee shop in town where we could sit and gab indefinitely without getting thrown out on our ears. The management was swell about it and encouraged us to come there even though we were occupying a lot of space which could have been used by paying customers. We met there every morning — and sat there sometimes far into the afternoon.

More recently an "Upper Room" had been inaugurated for night workers. It also is rent-free, occupying part of the second floor of the offices of one of our AA Windsor contractors. The gang gathers there every Thursday morning — and not all night workers, either — and talks AA, drinks coffee and dunks doughnuts. It's the best proposition we've yet had to offer the night shift — it's handy, homey and convenient, and gets a big play. It looks like a fixture.

About two years after AA came to Windsor, one of the original three went to Leamington. He got lonely. He missed his meetings and was getting wobbly. So he did

something about it: He started a new group in Leamington. That was in September, 1945. Today the "defensive" efforts of that lonesome alcoholic have borne rich fruit. Leamington now has its own AA Hall, has branched out like a grapevine, and one of the town drunks of a few short years ago is now a city alderman.

Leamington carried the message to Tilbury, Chatham and Kingsville, all of which now have solid groups of their own and are spreading the message far and wide. We get a lot of speakers from these towns and we contribute a lot to them. After all, they are all within a radius of 50 miles and it isn't much of a chore to get around. (Kingsville, by the way, is one of the show places of Canada. It is the site of the Jack Miner Bird Sanctuary, where thousands of nature-lovers travel each year to view the Canada Geese, Wild Duck and Wild Swans which foregather there in huge flocks.) And Wallaceburg, a little farther away and an offshoot of Windsor, and also a great industrial center, is doing a good job and carrying the AA banner high as well.

Windsor hospitals have been tops. They have accepted AA patients (some of them pretty tough) without question, and have accorded us virtually unlimited privileges. Our medical men, some of them AAs themselves, have also been wonderful. In the early days

they gave us a cautious break, but experience has now caused them to back us to the hilt. Both doctors and hospitals now lean over backwards to help us... It makes a fellow feel pretty humble. *Because all of this came to pass when a Windsor drunk, over eight years ago, honestly wanted to do something about his drinking — and did it!*

I was guilty of understatement when I said Windsor is bi-lingual. It is tri-lingual! Here, we speak French, English and Alcoholic — the latter mostly in police court the morning after the night before. For Canadian ale and liquor are pretty potent and get many a good man down. Our field here, therefore is wide. But it is a rewarding field. The three helpless drunks of almost a decade ago have now expanded into five sturdy groups each bearing within itself the seeds of still further expansion. And out in the County the story is the same — new groups, new groups, ever new groups.

If you want to find AA in Windsor call "Operator" or look in the telephone directory. Indeed, it might pay you to do so. We've got something worthwhile for you here, drunk or sober. Windsor has always been called the Sun Parlor of Canada, but this has taken on a special meaning since the coming of AA. You'll find out what we mean when you dial that telephone.

— R.O.H., Windsor, Ontario