

December 1948

THE A.A.
GRAPEVINE

- - *the story of your magazine* - -

(The last of a series)

"IT'S just a crazy idea, but. . . ." The crazy idea that was born in the early spring of 1944 is now *The A.A. Grapevine*, the national monthly, pocket-size magazine of A.A., which has reached a paid circulation of about 15,000, without any promotion or pushing, and which is growing at a rate of over 300 new subscriptions a month.

Like so many A.A. projects, this one seemed to have special guidance from the start and to come along at just the right moment to fill a need. Originally conceived as no more than a local publication for the groups in the New York metropolitan area, the founders of *The A.A. Grapevine* were more surprised than anyone to see their creation grow steadily from the first issue, pick up subscribers—by request—out through the country and finally go regularly to many parts of the world.

THE "crazy" A.A. who had the crazy idea was Lois K., a member of one of the New York area groups who felt that some kind of a regular publication might serve as a useful bond for all members in this region. She first took her idea to Bill W. and Marty M., neither of whom thought it was "crazy" at all. Then followed a preliminary meeting of four women A.A.s, Lois K., Marty M., Priscilla P., and Grace O., early in 1944, at which they discussed such matters as format, editorial policy and finances. After a second meeting of the same group, they suddenly realized that the male contingent in A.A. probably should be represented in the project and decided that Chase H. and Abbott T. would be good additions to the staff.

On April 19, 1944, a third meeting was held by this same group with two or three other A.A.s who later dropped out, and one good non-A.A.

friend, Fulton O., who provided some measure of financial stability by writing out a check to cover the estimated printing bill for the first issue. Rough dummies had been prepared for this meeting and Lois K., notwithstanding a bout with the "flu," or perhaps because of it, came up out of a fever with the name, "*Grapevine*."

The initial issue came out in June, 1944, after much worry and sweat, many meetings and long hours for all of the staff. About 1,200 copies were put in the mail mostly to A.A.s in and around New York, but also to a few out through the country and to a limited number of non-A.A. friends.

EACH issue entailed a considerable amount of labor, as might be expected, all of which was done voluntarily by the staff after the daily close of their regular jobs. Looking back on those early beginning, one of that staff recalls, "We were astonished each month that we had really gotten out another issue."

But *The A.A. Grapevine* never missed an issue and still hasn't. It came out later some months than others and there have been times when the filling of eight pages seemed an utterly impossible task, but with this issue it now has a publication record of 54 consecutive months.

When it began to appear from the steadily growing circulation that A.A.S wanted a publication of this

kind and that it was filling and performing a useful service, Bill W. decided the status of *The Grapevine* should be submitted to the groups. On October 3, 1945, a letter was sent out from General Service Headquarters asking whether the groups wanted *The Grapevine* continued and whether they wanted to designate it as the official periodical of A.A. The answers with one exception were favorable. Following this *The Grapevine* was incorporated as, "The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.," and to meet legal requirements officers, members of the staff, were named.

From the first issue, the guiding purpose of *The Grapevine* has been to publish material adjudged to be consistent with A.A. and helpful to sobriety. The editors seek to include in each issue something of interest and help to both newcomers and old-timers, and to make each issue a kind of international monthly meeting in print and a place for the exchange of thoughts by members throughout the world,

MEMBERS of A.A. as a whole are really the editors of *The A.A. Grapevine*. The majority of the articles printed each month are contributed by members in all parts of the U. S. and abroad. The new pocket size format which began with the September, 1948, issue and the editorial text follow preferences indicated in a reader survey taken in March, 1948, when a questionnaire

was sent out to all subscribers asking them to signify what type of articles and makeup they wanted.

For practical business purposes *The A.A. Grapevine* is organized as any consumer publication. Corresponding to the publishers of any magazine or newspaper is the A.A. Grapevine Board of Directors. This board has a membership of seven and is headed by the senior editor of the magazine. Included in this membership is one non-alcoholic and one alcoholic member of the Board of Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation. These men serve voluntarily and decide the over-all policy and business matters of the publication.

For the first two years the job of getting the magazine out was done entirely by non-paid volunteers. But as circulation grew and more and more articles were received and more and more correspondence from individual members called for answers, the work load became too great for only after-hour attention.

WHILE there is still a staff of non-paid volunteers, the senior editor and the associate editors who meet once each month to discuss and plan the editorial content of the magazine the daily work mechanics of and producing *The A.A.*

Grapevines are done by four paid workers—the managing editor, the circulation manager and two assistants.

There is no set number of associate editors. These men and women volunteers each lend their expert talents to making a success of *The A.A. Grapevine*. Each has his particular assignment and contributes to the editorial content, the art work and the business technicalities of running the magazine. These men and women and the paid staff are constantly on the alert and are working daily to keep abreast of the magazine's continued growth.

Not yet self-supporting, though rapidly approaching that point, *The A.A. Grapevine* has been subsidized by special appropriations from the Alcoholic Foundation in modest sums as needs have arisen.

Four and one-half months ago, larger quarters became necessary and *The A.A. Grapevine* office was moved from a small office in Greenwich Village to 241 East Broadway.

After its modest beginning, the "crazy" idea has really taken root. But *The A.A. Grapevine* will continue to be put to the test of whether it is performing a useful service and will continue to be published only so long as it does.



**FIRST THINGS
FIRST**