

June 1954

## *courage* *to change the things we can* *1944-1954*

IT'S hard to realize today that when the year 1944 began the word alcoholism was still a hush-hush word, not to be uttered above a whisper, taboo to most people, and unknown as a word to even more. The press was afraid of it, afraid of the public's reaction to such an "unpleasant" subject—so much so that even the phenomenal response the *Saturday Evening Post* had received to the now-famous Jack Alexander article on AA in March, 1941, had not convinced other publications that they too might safely publish articles on alcoholism and AA.

It's hard to believe that in 1944 AA was still struggling to become established in many many parts of the country; that the membership was barely 10,000; that the cooperation of the medical profession, of hospitals, of employers and even of the families and friends of alcoholics was still a far-off dream.

It's hard to remember that, in 1944 AAs themselves had little opportunity of communicating with each other outside of their own small groups; that an AA group in Arkansas had little idea

of how an AA group in Ohio or New Jersey conducted its meetings and its affairs; that many AA groups were so small and so anonymous they couldn't be found by a travelling AA who had not taken the precaution of getting names and addresses from the Central Office; that there were no AA publications beyond the Big Book and one or two pamphlets.

1944 marked a turning point in all this. The spring of 1944 was particularly rich in creative ideas about alcoholism, alcoholics, and AA. None of these ideas were new. They had all been done before in other fields. What was new and creative was their application to our field of alcoholism. In February the idea for an educational campaign to change public attitudes on alcoholism was born; this became the National Committee on Alcoholism. In March the idea for outpatient clinics devoted entirely to the diagnosis and treatment of alcoholics became a reality with the opening of the first Yale Plan Clinic. And in April the idea for an AA magazine, of, by, and for AAs, created *The Grapevine*.