

February 1950

## ...it might have been the time...

*"I too needed  
spiritual  
development"*

*by Lis*

IT is hard to say just when Alcoholics Anonymous began. It may have been at the time a friend came to see my husband, Bill. Or it may have been at the moment of Bill's spiritual experience. Most AAs feel it is the time six months later when he met Dr. Bob in Akron and, together, they started to help other alcoholics who wanted to be rid of their addiction.

But for me it was the day I first saw the released expression on my husband's face. We had been married 17 years, and were compatible and companionable. Our interests were similar and we both deeply desired and strove for the other's welfare. The only, but considerable block to our happiness was Bill's uncontrolled drinking. In the early years he said that he could stop when he wanted and I thought I'd soon be able to make life so complete for him that he would wish to quit drinking entirely. Much later when he really did want to stop,

he was absolutely unable to do so, and we both then became terribly confused and frustrated. Oddly enough he had been in other matters a person of strong will power, but his will seemed to melt away where alcohol was concerned. In his remorse and disappointment he was a tragic and heart breaking figure. I too felt myself a failure, for despite every endeavor, I had not been able to help him in time, nor could I aid him in the least in his final struggle for freedom.

TODAY I can talk and write about these intimate details of our life together. While Bill was drinking, I dared not even speak to my family about it and tried to hide the fact of his alcoholism in every way possible. Now that I have learned that Bill was actually a very sick man, that awful feeling of disgrace has left me. I have also learned how much help the telling of such experiences can be

to those who are going through similar ones. After fifteen years in AA the old trying times are so far away and foreign to Bill's and my present way of life that it seems like the experience of someone else.

AFTER Bill left the hospital for the last time, he began to think of the thousands of alcoholics who wanted to be rid of their malady. If they could be made to feel desperate enough, they might have a releasing experience just like his. He would hold before them the medical verdict that alcoholism was hopeless. So tirelessly, day and night, we worked. Our home was filled with alcoholics in various stages of sobriety. As many as five of them lived with us at one time. But none of them stayed sober for long. Then started a long process of trial and error, certain ideas were retained, but many discarded.

It was in June 1935 that Bill went to Akron, Ohio on a business trip. The venture failed. He finally contacted Dr. Bob, an Akron surgeon soon to become cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bob too wanted above all to stop drinking. He and his wife, Anne, had done everything they could.

SOMETHING passed between these two men. There was real mutuality this time. By example they showed how it worked. Thus

AA spread like a chain letter.

Bill had learned a great deal. At first he had tried to put every alcoholic he met in the way of a spiritual experience just like his own. As AA grew, he realized that what had come to him in a few dramatic minutes usually dawns on others in months or years. Sometimes the alcoholic himself does not even realize his own development, though his words and actions soon speak for him, for he is doing now what, of himself, he was unable to do before. He is staying sober and helping other people as never before. He is gaining a serenity, a joy in living.

WATCHING Bill and the other men at the meetings, I noticed many of them had begun to grow by leaps and bounds. This made me look at myself. I had been given a sound religious upbringing and felt I had done for Bill all a good wife could do, although this was strangely mixed with a sense of failure. At first it never occurred to me that I too needed spiritual development. I did not realize that by living such an abnormal life I might have become twisted, losing a sense of true values. After awhile I saw that unless I jumped on the bandwagon too, I would be left way behind. The AA Program I found could be most helpful to the non-alcoholic as well, a fact thousands of alcoholics' relatives and friends now apply to their own lives.

Those Clinton Street days are full of memories. Some of them are humorous, some tragic. But most of them bring back a warm glow of hope and courage, of friendship and rebirth. For the fellowship in AA is unique. Ties are made overnight that it would take years to develop elsewhere. No one needs

a false front. All barriers are down. Some who have felt outcasts all their lives, now know they really belong. From feeling as if they were dragging anchor through life, they suddenly sail free before the wind. For now they can be of tremendous and peculiar use to others having a dire need like their own.



### Are You Unappreciated?

**I**F you are an especially active and hard working member of Alcoholics Anonymous, and you are going along, day after day, unhonored, unrecognized and unsung—may I congratulate you?

No higher mark of appreciation could be paid you than to be taken for granted. That means that you are accounted as an inner member of the inner circle, your service naturally expected, no problem about you suspected which might require solicitude or special attention.

Of course, such a regard is not very thrilling. The person doesn't live who doesn't like to be appreciated. But this is the way it

usually is in Alcoholics Anonymous. The most genuine, the sincerest mark of appreciation is to be taken for granted.

Beware of lavish attention, constant expressions of your value, and overflow of thank-you's.

It may be that you are an exception to the above rule and are just lucky. But it is more probable that people are either not quite sure about your staying in line, or that your reputation for sensitiveness is well known and its demand simply being met.

There are few places where just being ignored is such an honest tribute as in Alcoholics Anonymous.—*Les, Waukesha, Wisc.*



### ONLY THE 1ST STEP?

**Q**UITE recently a friend of mine came out with the remark, "Poor Bill has had another slip." Now it was quite natural on hearing this that I should conclude that Bill had indulged again in a little serious drinking. But why, I have since asked myself, must a slip—if the word has to be used—only suggest a transgression of the 1st Step? Ours is a Program of 12 Steps. It does not begin and end with the cessation of our drinking habit. It is the adoption of a way of life. It is the adherence to a credo as laid down in those 12 Steps. And so I feel—once I

have found the way—if I should relax in my adherence to any of those Steps—if I should so stray in my thinking again—to become intolerant—to lose my temper and be unwilling to beg for pardon—to speak unkindly and yet feel no remorse or seek forgiveness—I shall have slipped just as surely as my unfortunate brother who had imbibed again. And thus I find myself in agreement with the words of Frederick the Great, "Every man must get to Heaven in his own way."—*The Lifeline, Vancouver, B. C., Canada*