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A monthly journal devoted to those seeking farther knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, in the hope that it may prove a unifying bond to all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.

Modesty One Plank for Good Public Relations

By Bill W.

During its brief few years in the public eye, Alcoholics Anonymous has received hundreds of thousands of words of newspaper and magazine publicity. These channels have been augmented recently by radio commentators and, here and there, A.A.-sponsored radio broadcasts. Hardly a word of criticism or ridicule has ever been uttered about us. While our publicity has sometimes lacked a certain dignity we can scarcely complain of that. After all, drinking is not such a dignified business!

We surely have reason for great gratitude that multitudes of writers, editors, clergymen, doctors—friends of every description—have continued so sympathetically and so enthusiastically to urge our cause. As a direct result of their efforts thousands of alcoholics have come to A.A. It is a good record. Providentially good, when one considers how many mistakes we might have made; how deeply, had other policies been followed, we might now be involved. In the "wet—dry" controversy for example. Conceivably we might even have fallen out with our good friends, religion and medicine. None of these things have happened. We have been unbelievably fortunate, thank God.

But by the Grace of God—

While this makes fine success story reading, it is not, to our way of thinking, any reason for self-congratulation. Older A.A.s who know the record are unanimous in their feeling that an Intelligence greater than" ours has surely been at work, else we could never have avoided so many pitfalls, could never have been so happily related to our millions of friends in the outside world.

Yet history records the rise, and let us not forget, the fall of any number of promising and

benign undertakings—political, religious and social. While some did outlive their usefulness the greater part died prematurely. Something wrong or unsound within them always became apparent without. Their public relations suffered, they grew no more; they bogged down to a dead level or fell apart.

Personal glorification, overweening pride, consuming ambition, exhibitionism, intolerant smugness, money or power madness, refusal to admit mistakes and learn from them, self-satisfaction, lazy complacency—these, and many more are the garden varieties of ills which so often beset movements as well as individuals.

While we A.A.s, as individuals, have suffered much from just such defects, and must daily admit and deal with them in our personal lives if we are to stay sober and useful, it is nevertheless true that such attitudes have seldom crept into our public relations. But some day they might. Let us never say, "It can't happen here."

It Did Happen Then

Those who read the July *Grapevine* were startled, then sobered, by the account which it carried of the Washingtonian movement. It was hard for us to believe that 100 years ago the newspapers of this country were carrying enthusiastic accounts about 100,000 alcoholics who were helping each other stay sober; that today the influence of this good work has so com-

pletely disappeared that few of us had ever heard of it.

Let's cast our eyes over that *Grapevine* piece about the Washingtonians and excerpt a few sentences: "Mass meeting in 1841, at City Hall Park, New York City, attracted 4,000 listeners. Speakers stood on upturned rum kegs." "Triumphal parades in Boston. Historic Faneuil Hall jammed." (*Overdone self-advertising—exhibitionism? Anyhow, it sounds very alcoholic, doesn't it!*) "Politicians looked hungrily at the swelling membership... helped wreck local groups through their efforts to line up votes." (*Looks like personal ambition again, also unnecessary group participation in controversial issues; the hot political issue was then abolition of slavery.*) "The Washingtonians were confident... they scorned old methods." (*Too cocksure, maybe. Couldn't learn from others and became competitive, instead of cooperative, with other organizations in their field.*)

Like A.A., the Washingtonians originally had but one object: "Was concerned only with the reclamation of drunkards and held that it was none of its affair if others used alcohol who seemed little harmed by it." But later on came this development: "There was division among the older local organizations—some wanted wines and beers—some clamored for legislation to outlaw alcohol—in its zeal for new members many intemperate drinkers, not necessarily alcoholic, were pledged." (*The original strong and simple group purpose was thus dissipated in fruitless controversy and divergent aims.*)

Editorial Squabbles

And again, "Some (of the Washingtonian local groups) dipped into their treasuries to finance their own publications. There was no overall editorial policy. Editors of local papers

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IF YOU MOVE

Changes of address should be sent to *The Grapevine* because the post office forwards ONLY first class mail. Such matters as magazines will not be forwarded to you even though you record a change in address at the postoffice.

Send your new address to *The Grapevine* if you want to continue to receive it.

EDITORIAL:

On the 10th Step...

"Continued 'to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it"

THE admission of a wrong compares in its effects to a strong cauterizing agent. When applied promptly it burns away the infection, but the treatment may be painful. How much mental pain an individual incurs by admitting a wrong depends not so much on the degree of the wrong as on how seriously he is afflicted with vanity and false pride. The more vain the person, the more reluctant he is ever to admit a mistake. The more false pride he has, the more imperative it seems to him to perpetuate the illusion of his own perfection.

Since we all know that vanity and false pride are distortions of the mind, perhaps the reason they are so common is the fact that, although we can spot them immediately in others, we have considerable difficulty in detecting them in ourselves.

Here the value of the personal inventory is self-evident. If it is honest and thorough, it will leave no vanities and false pride unrevealed. It is the means by which we can detect in ourselves the faults we note so readily in others and which we know are obstacles to the growth of an effective and happy personality.

The first inventory we take as we begin to apply the A.A. program naturally tends to be the most soul-searching and the most revealing. In most cases, it is the first self-reckoning we have undertaken in many years and most of us are likely to unearth a great accumulation of debris.

This inventory provides the guide for basic, and usually drastic, correction. Subsequent inventories serve to show whether the first efforts toward correction have been effective and what additional correction may be needed. By this method of personal checkup, we can determine for ourselves whether we are actually moving forward or have slipped backward.

Continued personal inventory is also a medium for readjustment to new objectives. As the A.A. moves upward he frequently finds that he is constantly lifting his sights. What satisfied him previously does not do so any longer. When he was learning to crawl he looked ahead to being able to walk. When he could walk he wanted to run. His expanding personality demands larger fields. If the person he wanted to be yesterday has come into being, he now wishes to be a still better person.

The inventory, obviously, is only part of the treatment. The deficiencies it reveals must be made up. Or, in the thought of the 10th Step: When wrong, promptly admit it. That is putting the inventoried knowledge into action.

Haliburton once wrote, "When a man is wrong and won't admit it, he always gets angry."

Anger, as we well know, is particularly poisonous to us. How foolish and ironical to fall prey to it through vanity!

Letters to the Grapevine...

Dear Grapevine: Miracles never cease... that is in the workings of A.A. Three years ago a man who had just moved to Jacksonville sent out the "S.O.S." and was presented the A.A. program. He and his wife at that time were being sheltered by friends. In one month he had progressed to the point where he was able to rent a duplex apartment and put the cash

down for one month's rent.

But success had come too fast and the first day in their new home Mr. A. comes up plastered and making quite a scene directly in front of the new place and the new landlord, who promptly and positively requested them to leave at once and for good. However, having paid in

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ALCOHOLIANA

I

Included in his *Essays of Elia* is a piece by Charles Lamb (1775-1834) entitled, "Confessions of a Drunkard." So realistic and subjective were its tone and mood that many contemporaries of the great essayist thought it was his own story. Accordingly, he was later compelled to repudiate its seeming biographical implications. Nonetheless, the following excerpts sound pretty clinical in his description of the alcoholic, his plea for tolerance and the remedy—abstinence.

"Business, which... I used to enter upon with some degree of alacrity, now wearies, affrights, perplexes me. I fancy all sorts of discouragements and am ready to give up an occupation which gives me bread, from a harrowing conceit of incapacity. The slightest commission given me by a friend, or any small duty which I have to perform for myself, as giving orders to a tradesman, etc., haunts me as a labour impossible to be got through, so much the springs of action are broken."

"... [A drunkard may] arrive at that state in which, paradoxical as it may appear, *reason shall only visit him through intoxication*; for it is a fearful truth that... the drinking man is never less himself than during his sober intervals. Evil is so far his god."

"... It is to the weak—the nervous; to those who feel the want of some artificial aid to raise their spirits in society, to what is no more than the ordinary pitch of all around them without it. This is the secret of our drinking. Such must fly the convivial board in the first instance, if they do not mean to sell themselves for term of life."

"Oh pause, thou sturdy moralist, thou person of stout nerves and a strong head, whose liver is happily untouched, and the gorge riseth at the *name I* had written; first learn what the *thing* is; how much of compassion, how much of human allowance thou mayest virtuously mingle with thy disapprobation. Trample not on the ruins of a man. Exact not under so terrible a penalty as infamy, a resuscitation from a state of death almost as real as that from which Lazarus rose not but by a miracle."

"But is there no middle way betwixt total abstinence and the excess which kills you?... For your sake, reader, and that you may never attain to my experience, with pain I must utter the dreadful truth, that there is none, none that I can find."

But how "dreadful" really is that truth, the recognition of which is the foundation of our philosophy and program?

ROY •\$. Monclair. A. /.

ONE MAN'S OPINION AS HE SEES THE 'SPIRITUAL ANGLE'

"There are no atheists in foxholes" is an expression which has been current nearly three years, though its authenticity has been challenged by skeptics. It also might be said that "there are no atheists in A.A.," though this statement, too, might be open to question.

It is by no means easy to estimate just how much spiritual faith is necessary to grasp the A.A. message and to follow the A.A. program in its fullest measure. The problem has been brought home several times recently when this writer was engaging in 12th Step work, and the question was not answered easily.

By way of preamble, it is best to assert that the present writer is not an atheist, since he does not pursue a system of thought opposed to belief in God. Strictly speaking, atheism is not the declining to assert an affirmative belief in theism, but is the assertion of the negative to theism. It may take the form of asserting the exclusion of a First Cause, or of asserting the non-existence of a personal God. Moral atheism is expressed in the assertion that no spiritual First Cause exists, that if God exists man never has learned and never can learn His will, and that, since no divine sanction can be found for morals, right or wrong in conduct are determined solely by circumstances. Any philosophy, then, which omits the existence of God from its consideration may be defined as negative atheism.

It is this writer's opinion that even such a blank conscience as the foregoing might be receptive to the A.A. program, granting a whole-hearted acceptance of the first step, though he does not endorse the above tenets himself.

I believe there is only one source for all life whose ineffably superior power is revealed in the few details of creation which we are able to perceive with our limited understanding. To me, God is only the primal energy which set in motion the forces and laws which brought into existence and now govern the universe.

Let me hasten to grant that this is just my opinion. It could be incorrect. Furthermore, I may some day change my opinion. I do not claim to be infallible. I merely am stating my opinion on a subject which frequently arises in discussion with new A.A.s and some not so new.

Without putting forward any formalized creed of my own, I hold that every man has a perfect right to choose his own faith, unbound by any set of articles. While holding my own beliefs, I wish everyone to decide for himself what God is, without forfeiting my right to choose among conflicting views of doctrine and statement those

The Pleasures of Reading

The Crack Up: F. Scott Fitzgerald, edited by Edmund Wilson (*New Directions Publishing Co.*, \$3.50).

Contrary to popular legend, it is not good to stay young forever. Immaturity in the adult is a trouble maker. One of the great things about A.A. is that we learn to grow up.

Scott Fitzgerald was chronically immature. He wrote about the Jazz Age, the prohibition era, when so many of us started to drink. It was the age of the child who refuses to grow up and who grows into a sick adult instead. At 23, Fitzgerald was at the height of his fame and success. He wrote *This Side of Paradise* at the end of a long drinking bout. At 28 he began to decline, both as a writer and a human being. It was all part of the same thing.

Edmund Wilson has called this book *The Crack Up*, taking the title from Fitzgerald's own description of himself during a nervous breakdown. This is Wilson's only comment. He was one of Fitzgerald's many friends, and the book is edited with sympathy, if perhaps not a complete understanding of what makes an alcoholic tick. The book is not a biography, but a life story, as revealed through Fitzgerald's own writings, his brief, thin pleasures, his childish aspirations, and his really agonized self searching. A few short article?, and notes and letters, two pieces written with his wife about a prolonged spree-like honeymoon, letters from friends, and articles on Fitzgerald written by friends (most of them writers), and last of all, his letters to his daughter, who wants to be a writer, too.

In one of these he says, "I am of course not drinking, and haven't been for a long time. But my illness is liable to have a toxic effect on the system and you may find me depressing, over-nervous about small things and dogmatic—all these qualities more intensified than you have previously experienced in me."

Fitzgerald had a recurrent TB, and in 1940, at the age of 44, he died. But it is not this that seems so tragic.

To an alcoholic, the whole book is reminiscent. It is one big spree, and one long, heart-breaking hangover. It is a brilliant account of a very sick man. The chapters, *Sleeping and Waking*, about his insomnia, and *The Crack Up*, about his crisis, are hair-raisingly familiar to many of us, who like myself, will sit up all night reading it.

His thinking and self questioning move from childish day dreams, with himself the hero, to petulance and tantrums against fate. But the dreams dissolve into: "Horror and waste. What I might have been and done, that is lost, spent, gone, dissipated, unrecapturable."

Most tragic of all was the fact that he knew he was sick, but he never knew why. He didn't know how to find out about himself. He hardly knew what his own symptoms were. This book is about a man who never got well, and never knew how to. Indeed it sounds like all of us when we first came to A.A.

And reading it, I for one, thought: "I am lucky. Wonderfully lucky."

F. G., Manhattan

Alcoholics Anonymous (*Works Publishing Co.*, Box 459, Grand Central Annex, N. Y. 17, price \$3.50).

(Editor's Note—*Alcoholics Anonymous* was out of stock for several weeks but is now available in a "wartime" edition. The contents of the new edition are the same, of course, and the book has the same number of pages as before. The only difference is that it is printed on different paper stock, the weight previously used being unavailable "for the duration.")

which seem to me to be true and right.

Since ethics are an important subject for us, I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy through perfect liberty, increased fellowship, and cooperation among mankind.

Perhaps those who are fortunate to have beliefs rooted in those of an organized faith might be tempted to say that such a creed as mine is

not enough for an A.A., yet one who holds to such broad conceptions of a Power Greater than Ourselves has been helped thereby in achieving almost three years' sobriety.

I will add this qualification: One must keep an open mind on the so-called "Spiritual Angle." But that also holds for other matters in A.A.

Truly, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

R. E. B., Manhattan

Vacation Time's Here! All A.A.s Will Beware!

The mailman today gave forth with a couple of those "Having wonderful time, wish you were here" postcards, a reminder that we're right in the midst of the good old summertime.

Which brings up the question: How good is it for us alkie? In the old days, a vacation was to some of us such a plausible excuse for a binge that it amounted to just one bottle after another. It was taken for granted that we'd drink up our holiday, either intentionally or by accident, at home or far afield.

For lusher of our ilk, vacation time can still be a vicious period, even though we have dried up in A.A. If our mental makeup hasn't changed all its habits, we can fall hack pretty

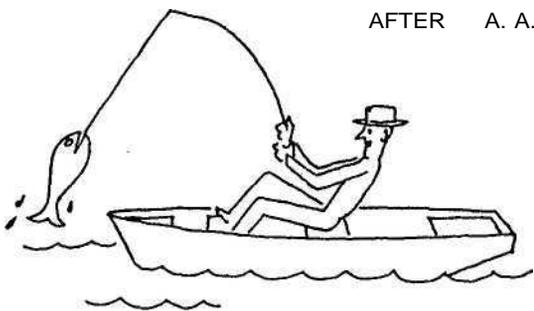


BEFORE A.A.

easily into the physical habits of past years and allow such a let-down from workaday routine to throw us off the beam.

This year there is little likelihood that any of us will be making long trips. Boys fighting the war must occupy every railroad sleeper and coach. That same war takes the gas and tires that otherwise might bear us pleasure-bent. Besides, extended vacations don't make a hit with the boss (as some of us have learned the hard way). Jobs today demand pretty close attention.

Looking at ourselves, though, as a particular "germs homo," a vacation of some sort is often the ounce of prevention that we alcoholics need. We're prone to work too hard, too long, when we do knuckle down to business—and to crack under the strain at the most unexpected and in-



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opportune moments! Part of our program should be directed towards achieving a "norm" in our schedules, our energies, our relaxation. And there are easily as many ways to vacation to advantage as there are ways to waste precious free time.

Anyone who has given our recovery much thought recognizes the fact that the bodies as well as the minds of most drunks are in need of repair, even long after we have gotten over the jitters. By getting in good physical shape now, during the summer when it's easy and fun, we can keep a lot of kinks from developing next winter.

Forget the lean years, the days of escape mechanism, when you think about a vacation. Go back to happier days, to your youth, to your honeymoon. You liked to go fishing then, didn't you? Or to canoe, and swim, or tramp through the woods and cook over a camp fire? Did you thrill your bride with your nature lore? Try it again. Do the things your children want to do, rather than make them fit into your plans.

If you have a vacation spot, share it with one or two A.A.s not so fortunate. Giving someone else the lift that fresh air and sunshine afford will make your own vacation far happier than retreating to your haunt alone, selfishly wolfing its particular delights.

If you don't have your own back forty to weed and manicure, get another A.A. or take the wife and kids down on the farm. You don't



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need an invitation, and this suggestion isn't for lazy guys. Farmers all over the land are pleading for harvest help. It's hard work, but for a city man it's a wonderful way to spend two weeks.

Maybe you're going to combine business with pleasure and sandwich your holiday into a necessary trip. If so, remember first things first, even when you're off your own stamping grounds. Wherever you go, look up A.A. You'll find it almost everywhere now.

You'll be greeted as a friend in nearly 500 cities, towns, and hamlets in the United States. Some boast clubhouses, listed big as life in the telephone directories so that you have no excuse, for being lonesome in the big city. And you have little excuse for not locating the boys and girls wherever you may be. Drop a postcard to the Central Office, Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York, N. Y., or to the Midwest office, 209 South State St., Chicago, Ill, and ask for the names and addresses of A.A.s in the

ports of call you plan to hit. If you find yourself in a strange town unexpectedly, check with



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the local newspaper or the police department. We're pretty well-known.

Part of the job of A.A.s is learning to recognize monotony and to break it, without breaking up. That was our old routine. The trick is to substitute for our old vacation let-downs a real vacation pick-up.

Modesty One Plank

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got into squabbles with editors of temperance papers." (Apparently the difficulty was not necessarily the fact they had local publications. It was more due to the refusal of the Washingtonians to stick to their original, purpose and so refrain from fighting anybody; also to the obvious fact that they had no national public relations policy or tradition which all members were willing to follow.)

We are sure that if the original Washingtonians could return to this planet they would be glad to see us learning from their mistakes. They would not regard our observations as aimless criticism. Had we lived in their day we might have made the same errors. Perhaps we are beginning to make some of them now.

So we need to constantly scrutinize ourselves carefully, in order to make everlastingly certain that we always shall be strong enough and single purposed enough from within, to relate ourselves rightly to the world without.

Now then, does A.A. have a public relations policy? Is it good enough? Are its main principles clear? Can it meet changing conditions over the years to come?

Now that we are growing so rapidly into public view, many A.A.s are becoming acutely conscious of these questions. In the September *Grapevine* I'll try to briefly outline what our present public relations practices are, how they developed, and where, in the judgment of most older A. A. members, they could perhaps be improved to better cope with our new and more pressing problems.

May we always be willing to learn from experience!

Mail Call for All A.A.s in the Armed Forces

"As a very new A.A.—less than two months—I can find only one gripe. In the best illogical tradition of the Army it is that I didn't find A.A. soon enough, specifically, before I went overseas. I had 18 months of the Middle East and I'm firmly convinced that the toughest job for a soldier who is trying to get away from alcohol is to be stuck in a non-combat overseas post in a command the chiefest ingredient of which is boredom.

"I drew Persia and any other GI who has served there can explain to strangers that the combination of camels, loneliness and free hours with nothing to fill them leads to an almost immediate discovery of the wines of the country—vodka, zorovka (a vodka derivative which borrows a faint brownish color from the stalk of buffalo grass stuck in every bottle) and masticque (otherwise known as arak, raki and zibib, a cousin of the absinthe family one gulp of which starts a three alarm fire in your vitals, several gulps of which puts out both the fire and you).

"The soldier-alcoholic, whether in a rear echelon, in combat or on garrison duty in the U.S., has a different set of problems than his civilian brother-in-allergy. Even a line outfit has its fill of blank hours and nothing can be blanker than spare time in uniform. Between this boredom and the occasional hard work or swift action which gives you an excuse and almost a necessity for emotional relief of some sort, the GI is usually in a mood where he wants and thinks he needs a short one.

"I found it possible, for short spells of time, to go on the wagon overseas. But it was never a satisfactory solution. It is too easy, in the Army, to find an alibi to go off. Maybe you have just come into town from a long truck convoy over days of dusty roads with no more sustenance than C-rations and lukewarm canteen water. Maybe you are on a three-day pass from combat. Maybe you have had a fight with the Old Man and, according to the rigidity of Army discipline, have no other way of getting back at him than to tie one on for your own satisfaction. At any rate, when you do hit the town, when you do get the pass, when you have that fight, you don't lack for friends to help you drown your sorrows. And you have assisting you liquorwards also a long and strong, if not entirely accurate, tradition that a good soldier is a two-fisted drinker and that you're not an honest-to-goodness soldier until you've been busted a couple of times for drunkenness.

"These invitations to drink apply equally to the A.A. alcoholic in uniform as they do to his unenlightened brother, but I honestly believe the A.A. has a good chance of beating them while the non-A.A. doesn't have better than 100-to-one odds in his favor. Even a fledgling A.A.

realizes that the organization and its philosophy give him something to cushion the shock of not drinking, something to fill the open space left in his social life when he puts away the bottle.

"When I went on the wagon in the Army—not as an A.A.—I was acutely miserable. I haunted the Special Service clubhouse or tent because I knew I wouldn't get a drink there, but the inanities of most Army entertainments loomed as even more inane to my still alcoholically critical eyes. I was constantly aware, every waking hour, that I was engaged in doing something I didn't like. A.A. hasn't deadened my critical faculties, but today I feel sure I could get amusement (sometimes perhaps snide), if not full enjoyment, out of a service club, and I am not a little suspicious that I might find myself participating in and enjoying the goings-on after a while.

"Needless to say, there should be any amount of 12th Step opportunities in the service, but I'm inclined to think that 12th Step work should be approached even more carefully than ordinarily when dealing with GIs. All of us in the Army are living in a close community full of community prejudices sharper and more quickly applied than in civilian life. The first thing to convince any alcoholic in uniform should be that by joining A.A. he is not making himself ridiculous and not abandoning his right to be one of the boys. If you can convince the boys, too, so much the better. From there on in you should have relatively clear sailing.

"In my own overseas drinking experience I have had many amusing and diverting adventures, so amusing and diverting that I get the dry heaves recalling them. There was the time I got tramped on by the camel, and the time I passed out on the Avenue Chah Reza in Teheran and had my pants stolen, and the time I fell head first into a lime-pit and had to take off my field jacket with a mason's chip hammer, and the endless times I had to weave back to camp one alley ahead of the MPs. Diverting as hell.

"Whatsa matter with this A.A. they didn't get me sooner? That's my only kick."

Sgt. A. H.

The Seed Was Planted

"I tried to follow the A.A. principles three years ago in my home town of Anderson, S. C., and it was too much for me all alone, and after

a few weeks I slipped, but several months ago I was able to affiliate with the Oklahoma City Group and I see now that the Higher Power intended things to work out this way. I have met some of the finest people in the world and only hope that after I'm discharged from the Service I will be able to partly repay them by carrying the A.A. message to Anderson, S. C. Had it not been for A.A., I'm afraid I would have gotten the little yellow discharge from the Navy long ago."

Jack G. C., Jr., HAI/c, U.S. Navy

Letters Look Good at Front

"I enjoyed your letter tremendously and am rather ashamed that I haven't written sooner. Ever since the day we hit this Oriental rock the time has flown — our hours are long and the nights are sleepless — we have had over one hundred alerts and a goodly number of raids in the short time I've been here. You see I left my old base in the Pacific in the latter part of April and now am right in the thick of it. I am writing this during an alert but haven't as yet heard any ack! ack! which is the signal for this ex-drunk to dive into his foxhole."

Sgt. Richard J. F. M., U.S.M.C.R.

Navy Chaplain Lauds Work

Dear Editor:

I have never needed A.A. help myself, but have had some very fine acquaintances whom it could have assisted long ago and might have kept them from sailing their ships on the rocks of alcoholic despair and destruction.

During the past month it has been my great privilege to watch from outside and also inside observation by attending meetings of A.A. in this city. I have seen its work and as a minister and chaplain in the Navy, I marvel at the results it seems to get from its application to alcoholics.

I have read all the literature at hand and hope to read more to get an insight into the very fine results and remarkable record that make for the conversion of alcoholics to most decent and reputable citizens.

I am enclosing herewith a check for \$1.50 for which you will please put me on as a yearly subscriber to *The Grapevine*. Would be glad to have any old copies and any other literature that you may see fit to send.

H.G.G., Captain, Ch. C, U.S.N.

Copies of *The Grapevine* are sent free to all A.A. servicemen and women. If you know of any member of the Armed Forces who is not on the mailing list, please send his or her name to the Editors.

TAKING TIME OFF MAY MEAN MORE TIME ON

Jim sank into a comfortable chair at the Club House. He had come all the way over, across town, to eat lunch here because he knew, instinctively, that today he needed to be surrounded by A.A. and the gang, but, now that he was here, he wondered why he had come. He was too hot and tired to climb the stairs to the cafeteria, or was that just an excuse because he didn't want to face the gang—the bright cheerful gang—my pals!—phewie!!

"What the hell is wrong with me, anyway? What got me into this lousy mood? Probably Clara's fault and that cup of muddy slop she handed me for breakfast. A man has a right to a decent cup of coffee before he goes out into that hell-hole that's New York in July to make money so she can buy decent coffee! If she knew how to make it! ! Then to top everything off—the stinking assignment the boss handed me this morning...."

He didn't hear Bill Bentley come into the room until Bill's booming voice broke into little bright shafts of irritating noise against his ear drums.

"Why the dumps, old man?" was what Bill had said. "Did somebody steal your paper dolls or did the boss say no vacation?"

Jim felt an unreasonable wave of resentment rising up in his throat. He wished Bill would take himself, his revolting good health and his hearty smile out of the room—out of his life—out—to hell. He couldn't show his emotions, though. That'd be fatal. One inkling of his true feelings exposed and the grapevine would start working. Before the day was over the boys downstairs in the game-room would be making book—"Too bad about old Jim"—"Off the beam badly--and after four years, too"—"It won't be long now—Jim's doing *drinkin' thinkin'*. He could just hear them, the so-and-so's—just waiting to pounce on a guy—and a drink was the farthest thing from his mind—or was it? Holy jumpin' Jehosephat, *not that!*

"I'm all right, Bill," he managed with a grin that was meant to be bright, but missed. "It's this damned heat, I guess, and I'm sort of tired—up all night with that new guy on 86th Street—lousy Park Avenue bum—and the boss handed me a job this morning that's a killer."

"No wonder you're down. About time you got away on a vacation, isn't it?"

"Vacation!" groaned Jim. "Oh sure! I'm scheduled for one next week, but I'll be so dogged tired by then that I'll probably spend it in bed. How the devil can you go on a vacation when you haven't the guts left to stand in line for a ticket for Hoboken and you're so rotten filthy tired that you don't care if you go to the sea shore or Timbucktoo—and you have ten

yapping new drunks, in diapers, who'll get plastered the minute your back is turned?"

He groaned inwardly. "Why must I belly-ache when it's just the thing I wasn't going to do?"

"Wait a minute, fellow," said Bill gently. "I know just how you feel. You're a remarkably reasonable facsimile of Bill Bentley, just two short weeks ago, and look at the darned thing now."

"O.K.," snapped Jim. "So you had the brown-whimpers for a day or two, but I don't notice any tell-tale grey on your spirit now."

"Certainly not, I look a vacation."

"Fine," Jim jeered, "You must have had at least enough steam to plan it and get started. I haven't."

"That's where you're wrong. Janet planned it and under difficulties, too. I bucked her at every turn—didn't want to go—didn't have the energy—didn't have the money for what I thought I wanted, if I wanted anything, which

was doubtful—and besides, I couldn't leave my dear sweet little drunken prospects whose sobriety depended on the pearls of wisdom that fell *only* from Bill Bentley's lips."

"How'd Janet make you go?" he asked with a flutter of interest.

"Well, first she reasoned, but I was beyond reasoning. So then, she nagged and I got stubborn and resentful. Finally, she shut up, wrote around to different spots that were within our reach, bought tickets (out of her own savings), packed up and then told me what she had done. Said I could go or stay or go to hell, but she was going to have a vacation and it'd take a bigger man than me to stop her. If I wanted to go along I could ride with her to the station or meet her at Grand Central. And, believe it or not, I didn't know what I'd do until about an hour before train time. I wouldn't speak to her in the taxi—barked at the red caps—sat on the train in stony silence to 125th Street, but, as we

(Continued on Page 8)

Shelby Group Helps Carolinian Find Himself

In the fall of 1939 the first A.A. meeting was held in Shelby, North Carolina. A group of three men met in the office of Dr. M., the sponsor of the group. Since then the group has moved meeting places several times. At present we have clubrooms in an uptown hotel. This location is ideal, being in the center of town. We have the usual club furnishings, lockers, showers, piano, radio, pool table, reading room, and a seating capacity of one hundred and twenty-five.

The membership has grown from three to forty solid members. Since 1939 more than a hundred members have passed through the club, many of whom are now in the armed services; others have gone to work in war plants, while some have moved for business reasons. In the past year, the Shelby group has been instrumental in starting clubs in Asheville, Charlotte, and Gastonia, in North Carolina, and in Spartanburg and Rock Hill in South Carolina. Some of these groups in the larger cities have grown fast and are doing outstanding work; all have got over most of their growing pains. All of these towns and cities being nearby, we have many inter-club meetings, which have been most helpful.

Since Shelby is a small city of some twenty thousand people it is almost impossible to remain anonymous. For this reason we do not reach some who undoubtedly need A.A., but, on the other hand, we enjoy a very close fellowship.

I first heard of A.A. in an alcoholic Ward of the State Hospital in the summer of 1940. It

was there I first saw the A.A. Hook. However, I only read a few pages, closed it and thought: this is some more religious stuff and not for me. Some months later I finished reading it in the same hospital and in the same ward. When I left the hospital this time I had high hopes for myself.

Upon my arrival home in a small town, some or most of my dreams faded away—not having anyone to talk A.A. with me. I only lasted a short while. Soon I was back in a sanatorium again. Within a month of my release I had lost my job. My wife needed little persuasion to leave me.

I was fortunate in getting a job in a city some twenty miles from Shelby. In three months I lost that. No job, no family, I was willing to try anything—so I came to Shelby drunk, checked in at a hotel. On my arrival someone must have reported me to A.A., for soon there were several men in my room to see me. Some I had met in various hospitals in different parts of the state; others were strangers. They came day and night. All looked well and happy. It was this that gave me my first hope. Several days later, while still shaky, I secured a job with a local firm.

This all happened a year ago, and since that time many blessings have been mine. I am now living with my wife and children, and needless to say, we are happy. I will ever be thankful to A.A., Dr. M., and Shelby.

W. B. McL., Shelby, N. C.

A. A. 's Country-Wide News Circuit

A.A.s of Richmond, Va., now have their own clubrooms—spacious second-floor quarters which they have acquired on a long-term lease from a member who recently purchased a building on Grace Street. Greater growth is predicted by the members, now that they have more lebensraum.... Cincinnatians have bought a big house with 16 rooms, 4 baths, and basement garage as their new A.A. headquarters. The property includes a lot 90 x 175 feet, with beautiful trees and gardens. The building is at the corner of Burnet Avenue and Oak Street.... The secretary of the Kansas City, Mo., A.A.s reports that they have bought a huge old "used to be" mansion and are now in the throes of renovating it for their clubhouse—and "we are going to be very proud of our new home." The address is 1925 North 11th Street.

And the first A.A. clubhouse, as such, is to be built by the North Hollywood group. Ground has already been broken on the Chandler Boulevard property that is now theirs, and a modern one-story \$10,000 building, with lots of

NIGHT LIFE COLUMNIST HEARS OF BRIGHTER DAY

When a night life columnist gets a first hand account of A.A. he's likely to be hearing the second chapter of the story he sees enacted nightly.

So, after Earl Wilson who writes the column, "It Happened Last Night," in the *New York Post*, had a talk with Jack B., of the Manhattan group, he dutifully reported it at length.

The column opened breezily with the explanation, "Being a Saloon Editor of the first water (or first scotch-and-water) I shouldn't be rapping alcohol. But the story of my friend Jack..., a successful young executive who used to be a souse, and is now a non-tippler and an Alcoholic Anonymous, may help some poor drunk back to decency."

By quoting copiously from Jack B., who must have been in rare and articulate form, the column set forth a considerable bit about A.A. and how it works. At one point, the column stated. "Now Jack has a hobby—talking to other luses. He sees somebody every day. He could see you tomorrow."

This departure in content, though not in style, from the usual night club column, opens still another possible means of contact with A.A. for someone who needs it.

windows for sunlight and fresh air, will soon be erected.

* * *

The wilds of Alaska have been penetrated by A.A. Well, not exactly the wilds, for Alaska's first group is in Skagway—a town known historically as the landing place of large quantities of supplies and thousands of people during the 1897-98 "Klondike Rush" to reach the gold mines in the upper (Canadian) Yukon.... Australia's first group, in Sydney, reports good progress—and another one is now under way 50 miles distant.... The Hawaiian A.A.s, in Honolulu, are going strong, their numbers ever increasing.

* * *

An out-of-town member, addressing his fellow alcoholics in Memphis, Tenn., explains A.A.'s success this way: "A psychiatrist talks to a hopelessly afflicted alcoholic at one time, and does him good. A physician attends to him at another time, and does him good. A minister talks with him at still another time, and does him good. The assistance each of these three agencies offers is needed deeply. But they come at different times. In A.A. I have found all three influences exerted in the same program."... In Fargo, N. D., a pastor speaking before a businessmen's club, said the basis for A.A.'s effectiveness was "spiritual."

* * *

Over a year ago Eleanor L. started a daytime group in the Los Angeles area for housewives and mothers, or just men and women who for various reasons couldn't get to night meetings. On May 3, 1944, Eleanor "presided" over an attendance of 1. Today she is presiding over an attendance of about 30 each week. She sees significance in the fact that women predominate the membership—women who are not employed outside their homes. There are also some working women and a few swingshift men. But the influx of A.A. women from the homes has convinced Eleanor that soon there'll be need of a group for them exclusively, a group pointed to deal more specifically with their distinct problems. She is preparing to meet this need as it becomes more apparent.

* * *

The Atlanta, Ga., Group has been successful in sobering up a home-town lad stationed in China—writing him long letters, sending him the A.A. book, the reprint of Jack Alexander's Saturday Evening Post article of 1941, and pamphlets. This achievement brought much spontaneous publicity. Result: the group is being flooded with mail from eligibles, friends and relatives who think if A.A.s in the U. S. A.

can sober up a drunk in China, maybe they've really got something.

* * *

In a late issue of *The Christian Science Monitor*, on the editorial page, speaks a man who doesn't mind letting the world know he has a drinking problem. John C. of Boston, Mass., writes of his inability to stay sober by himself, but since he "connected with A.A. and with God's help" he hasn't had a drop. "Strangest thing of all for one who loved his drink, I have no desire for it."

* * *

A recent fourth-birthday party in Dallas, Texas, was widely commented on by non-alcoholics as "the strangest party ever held in Dallas." It was the fourth year of dryness for Esther, the "New Orleans drunk," as she is affectionately called by her A.A. friends. Esther, who started both the Dallas and San Antonio groups, nowadays serves liquor in her home, for her husband must do much entertaining. And when the curiosity of guests is aroused over her not drinking she talks A.A. and loads them down with literature. People push drinks at her only once. "I'm an alcoholic," she says. "For me to drink is to die."

YOUR LETTER TO GRAPEVINE AIDS OTHERS

As all know who have been in A.A. any length of time, one of the purposes of the group meetings is to provide opportunity for the relation of experiences which enlighten and reassure both old and new members.

The accounting a speaker gives of his own case usually parallels that of one or more of the listeners in the audience who thereby add to their own store of self-knowledge. For the newcomer, the discovery, through what he hears from the speakers, that others have gone as far or farther than he along the road and then recovered, is indeed reassuring.

This exchange of experience is undoubtedly an invaluable tool in group therapy.

The same purpose can be, and it is hoped will be, served by *The Grapevine*. Letters to the editor, in which the writer relates some of his own experiences, or presents some of his conclusions, can augment the speaking programs conducted at the meetings.

Such letters are invited. Initials only will be published as signatures. Due to space limits the letters should be kept reasonably short. But, remember—

Your letter may help someone else.

A.A. Inspires Formation of The Seekers, Prisoners' Rehabilitation Group

In the formation of a unique club, The Seekers, conceived and developed by inmates of San Quentin Prison on San Francisco Bay, Alcoholics Anonymous is the inspiration for a moving story.

The new club, as reported in the press, was originated by a naturally introspective man who, during his first weeks in prison, came to see himself as he really had been—living for himself alone. His spiritual awakening brought the determination to regain his self-respect through service to others.

All around him he saw how eagerly the young inmates teamed up with former "big shots." To them these gangsters and killers were heroes. He knew what little chance the youngsters had under such influence. He found other inmates who shared his convictions. In working out their own lives to a better purpose they hoped to lead the young in the prison to do the same.

They observed the amazing accomplishments of the A.A. group in San Quentin, which has been thriving for three years. Men whose crimes were due to alcoholism were being rehabilitated right there before them. They saw some of these A.A.s—those whose terms were completed—go out into the world changed men, buoyant with new hope and secure in the knowledge that "out there" they would find the cooperation and friendship of thousands of other A.A.s.

The founder of The Seekers and like-minded inmates decided that if they could get together in the same spirit as A.A., they, too, could help themselves and others—and that, like the A.A.s in their work with alcoholics, only those who had been criminals knew how to make the appeal necessary for personality change and rehabilitation.

The members of the new club are dedicated to pay their debt to society by salvaging both

themselves and all new-comers they can encourage to join their group—especially first offenders. The Seekers hold regular meetings, which begin with personal stories and are followed by questions and answers, general discussion and summing up.

Warden Clinton Duffy, who from the start has cooperated wholeheartedly with the San Quentin A.A.s, has given the new club his full approval.

San Quentin's is only one of many A.A. groups within prison walls in the U. S. A.

Peekskill A.A.s have been instrumental in forming a group in Walkill Prison, near Newburgh, N. Y. Forty inmates attended the first meeting.... The first anniversary of the A.A. group in New Jersey State Prison was celebrated in June. Warden John L. O'Hara says the group has grown from 15 to 103 during the year.... Richard S., who had completed a 40-month term in Leavenworth (Kan.) penitentiary, again got into trouble and was on trial for passing forged checks. Learning that while in prison Richard had sold \$100,000 in war bonds to fellow inmates with independent means, collected \$3,500 for the Red Cross, received a citation from Secretary Morgenthau for his war bond sales—and that he had lately joined A.A.—the judge, instead of imprisoning him again, put him on probation for five years, and cautioned him to stick close to A.A.

Taking Time Off

(Continued from Page 6)

were pulling out of Greater New York, something seemed to be lifted off my shoulders. A weight was removed. I looked at Janet and smiled and then we both started giggling like a couple of school kids and we haven't stopped since. Great things, vacations. Even a vacation from A.A. is good, sometimes."

"Wait a minute, Bill, that's rebel talk. Say it in a whisper or the bright-boys will say you're getting high. Between you and me, though, how'd it go, a vacation from A.A.?"

"That's the damnest thing," said Bill thoughtfully. "We got to this place in Connecticut; a quiet little country hotel on the water, with a reasonable tariff and filled with nice, normal people with no apparent problems. Zowie! What a relief! For three days I wallowed in it. Swam, ate, slept and relaxed and then, about the fourth day, I felt restless, but Janet had thought of that, too. 'How about taking in a meeting in New Haven, tonight?', she threw out. I caught the ball with a yip of glee. It was just what I wanted and didn't know it. Wise gal, Janet! Well sir, I ran into old friends and made new ones that night and bless Jonathan,

if I didn't find some within walking distance of where we were staying. From then on, we had gatherings. I took in Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport and all of the other meetings within a reasonable radius and it was an experience to hear the same old 12 Steps dressed up in new words. I soaked it up as though I'd never heard A.A. before and the funny thing is, they thought I was an oracle because my dope was *imported!* Strange how it works out. Yeah, I had a vacation from A.A., for about three days out of the fourteen. Actually, though, it was just as much a vacation to get a fresh view-point as if I had been isolated. Of course, the barnacled bench and the balmy zepthers helped. They gave me the relaxation and the sense of being removed from my own personal problems. I needed that, but a friendly bunch of *rummies* were necessary to complete the picture."

"You've aroused a flicker of interest, pal, in this care-worn breast of mine. I'm off to tell Clara to give Janet a ring and take a lesson in how to be smart, then, you and I are going upstairs to satisfy a stirring inner-man I thought was down for the count. But first, answer just one more question: what did you do with the torn, tattered and drunken ewe-lambs that you left to fend for themselves?"

"That's the best of all. Of course I didn't quite forget them. Before I left I called a few of the boys and asked them to keep a weather-eye out and give a word of encouragement here and there and, was my ego blasted when I got back to find them all more or less hale and hearty, in various stages of recovery *and* without my expert care! The only trouble waiting for me was a couple of old timers, like us, who waited too long for that vacation in the country and wound up taking it at one of the bigger and better homes for inebriates—but enough of this. Let's to the telephone and then to the groceries. That reminds me. One of the first things I heard when I came into this grand and glorious association for alcoholics was: 'Don't ever let yourself get too hungry and don't get too tired.' In either condition you're a push-over for John Barleycorn."

Lois B.

Letters

(Continued from Page 2)

advance for 30 days and with the help of a lawyer they were allowed to remain for that length of time. Mr. A. got back on the program and of course that conduct justified another 30 days, and another, etc., until the present time.

Last month, Mr. A. put the cash on the line and purchased the very same apartment house that hewas about to be kicked out of three years ago. Another miracle to prove the workings of A.A.

T. A. S., Jacksonville, Fla.

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