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A monthly journal devoted to those seeking further 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.

A Postwar Challenge: How to Help the Veteran?

(Editor's Note: The war's end is only the beginning of a personal struggle for some of the men now coming home. This article is by one member of A.A., a veteran of the last war, who began his own drinking career largely as a result of boredom with readjustment to civilian life and because he missed the Army comradeship. It is a brief treatment of a complex subject and any ideas or comments from *Grapevine* readers will be welcomed by the staff.)

Many of us in A.A. are becoming acutely aware of the fact that more than a few returning service men will have to participate in another unfinished battle. How can we best reduce the number of ensuing serious casualties in their fight against our most dangerous enemy, John Barleycorn? How are we going to steer these men through the booby traps and mine fields old John places so skillfully in the path of the alcoholic?

Here is a challenge not to be ignored and a golden opportunity, as this member sees it, for A.A. to prove to those who remain skeptical that its program really works. To take a realistic, even if somewhat pessimistic, view of the matter, the veterans who, in many instances, have been under tremendous tension will eventually constitute a large section of the A.A. membership of the future. Must they travel the entire length of the alcoholic road in order to find an answer? We sincerely hope not.

For Them a Strange World

For some time after the conclusion of the war many of the ex-service men will seek in alcohol escape from a world with which they imagine they are out of tune, or they will drink too much, too quickly, simply because they are bored by the necessary adjustment from a more exciting manner of living or because they miss that rare sense of comradeship that often is the best part of life in the service. For a time their drinking, even if they are potential alcoholics, may not cause them serious trouble.

Then the inevitable debacle will occur. A cer-

tain percentage, probably a much larger percentage than in the case of the same number of men who have not undergone the nerve racking experiences of modern warfare, will find themselves getting out of control. The public by this time will have largely forgotten its feeling of gratitude to its fighting men and the veterans will indulge in a little self pity on that score. (What a powerful ally self pity is to old John!) Next families and employers will begin to show less and less tolerance for an increasing number of drunken escapades. In brief, the

SCHOOL AT YALE MECCA FOR MANY WITH SAME AIM

The third year of the Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies in Hartford, Conn., July 12 to August 7, was attended by about 150 people of various professions and organizations, including eleven A.A.s from New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Florida and Texas.

From all over the United States came social workers, probation officers, clergymen, representatives of the Salvation Army, the liquor industry, temperance societies, and the medical field. All were there to learn more about the complex problem of alcoholism.

A Manhattan A.A. who attended the school, said enthusiastically, "The most important thing for me, besides the lectures, was to discover that so many different kinds of people are vitally interested in alcoholism—each one concerned with alcoholism as it pertains just to his particular sphere of work. And they are just as eager to do something constructive about it as we A.A.s. We in A.A. may not always agree with all of the ideas of those people. They may sometimes be wrong—but so may we."

familiar alcoholic merry-go-round will be once more in motion.

Hospital Groups One Way

How then can A.A. best reach the veteran on his way to becoming an uncontrolled drinker or one whose drinking may already be interfering seriously with his normal living? In some veterans' hospitals A.A. groups have already been started where visiting A.A.s are permitted to attend and to assist in conducting meetings. This work is, of course, most useful but we are advised that so far it has not been very effective in reaching the younger men, although it seems to have helped a number of veterans of the last war. Again by no means all veterans who may become "prospects" will ever reach these hospitals. Chaplains, army doctors and officers at separation centers are becoming increasingly aware of the work of Alcoholics Anonymous and are able to suggest to some men still in service or about to be discharged that they try A.A.

Our greatest potential source of help in getting service men started in A.A., however, seems to be in the composition of our present membership. There are a goodly number of A.A.s still in the service, many of whom have remained "dry" under the most trying circumstances. There are also many now out of the service who may or may not have been in A.A. previous to discharge. In the latter category we may further include a substantial number of veterans of World War I. Presumably these A.A.s are the ones who not only will share the alcoholic problem with our future ex-service "suspect" or "prospect" but an understanding of the other real or imaginary problems which the newcomer may consider as reasons for his excessive drinking. Sharing similar experiences has been the main reason why A.A. members often make

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EDITORIAL:

On the 11th Step . . .

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

IT is often wisely said in A.A. that we should not become over-anxious, should not expect to get the whole program overnight, but should take the steps one at a time when we feel that we are ready for them. This means that although we are not ready at a given time to take this step or that one and are, therefore, not then taking it, we should be disposing ourselves toward it. It never means that we should plan on avoiding any of the steps.

Practice of the 11th Step is the surest method of disposing oneself toward all the other steps. It was only through seeking contact with God through meditation and prayer that some of us came to believe in Him and became willing to turn our wills and our lives over to Him. The wish to improve that contact, the searching for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out, gives us strength to make amends, to do the things necessary to remake our lives.

Unless we improve our contact with God we will gradually lose it. There will be a slow return to indifference and we will suffer that let-down that so many experience after a few months in A.A. Gradually old desires return with increasingly great urgency. The alteration in conduct that we have made for a few months has not been sufficiently sustained to lead to a change in character, and the deeper habit patterns reassert themselves. Growth in spiritual understanding alone will dispose us to make the effort to recondition ourselves, to change our emotional attitudes and bring about a true character change.

For specific suggestions for practicing the 11th Step we turn to the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, as we do on all A.A. questions, before going ahead on our own. Applying the wisdom we find there, we turn with newly awakened interest and intensity to the practices of our particular religious denomination, if we have one; we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers; we may study the recorded thoughts of others; but in any event we make it a practice in the morning to ask God to guide us during the day, and thank Him at the day's close for His many blessings. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends, but ask especially for freedom from self-will and knowledge of God's will for us.

Some of us have found the following verse helpful on awakening, when all our wishes and hopes for the day rush at us like wild animals; the first thing we must do is shove them all back, and listen to that other voice, letting a calmer, quieter, stronger life flow into us:

"Every morning rest your arms awhile upon the window-sill of Heaven and gaze upon your Lord, and with that vision in your heart turn strong to meet your day."

All of which, of course, is calculated to keep us from taking that first drink. It works—it really does.

D., Garden City, N. Y.

"Rules" Dangerous,

By Bill

(Second in a series of articles presenting basic A.A. policies for discussion,

Does Alcoholics Anonymous have a public relations policy? Is it adequate to meet our present and future needs?

Though it has never been definitely formulated or precisely stated, we certainly have a partly formed public relations policy. Like everything else in A.A., it has grown up out of trial and error. Nobody invented it. Nobody has ever laid down a set of rules or regulations to cover it, and I hope no one ever will. This is because rules and regulations seem to be little good for us. They seldom work well.

Were we to proceed by rules, somebody would have to make them and, more difficult still, somebody would have to enforce them. "Rule-making" has often been tried. It usually results in controversy among the "rule makers" as to what the rules should be. And when it comes to enforcing an edict—well, you all know the answer. When we try to enforce rules and regulations, however reasonable, we almost always get in so "dutch" that our authority disappears. A cry goes up, "Down with the dictators, off with their heads!" Hurt and astonished "Control Committee" after "Control Committee," "leader" after "leader" makes the discovery that *human authority*, be it ever so impartial or benign, seldom works long or well in our affairs. Alcoholics (no matter if ragged) are yet the most rugged of individualists, true anarchists at heart.

Of course, nobody claims this trait of ours to be a sterling virtue. During his first A.A. years every A.A. has had plenty of the urge to revolt against authority. I know I did, and can't claim to be over it yet. I've also served my time as a maker of rules, a regulator of other people's conduct. I too, have spent sleepless nights nursing my "wounded" ego, wondering how others whose lives I sought to manage could be so unreasonable, so thoughtless of "poor" me. I can now look back upon such experiences with much amusement. And gratitude as well. They taught me that the very quality which prompted me to govern other people was the identical egocentricity which boiled up in my fellow A.A.s when they themselves refused to be governed!

Non-A.A. Questions

A non-A.A. reader can be heard to exclaim, "This looks very serious for the future of these people. No organization, no rules, no authority? It's anarchy; it's dynamite; it's 'atomic' and bound to blow up. Public relations indeed! If there is no authority how can they have any public relations policy at all? That's the very

But Unity on Public Policies Vital to Future of A. A.

defect which ruined the Washingtonian alcoholics a hundred years ago. They mushroomed to 100,000 members, then collapsed. No effective policy or authority. Quarreled among themselves, so finally got a black eye with the public. Aren't these A.A.s just the same kind of drunks, the same kind of anarchists? How can they expect to succeed where the Washingtonians failed?"

Good questions, these. Have we the answers? While we must never be too sure there is reason to hope that we have, because forces seem to be at work in A.A. which were little evident among our brother alcoholics of the 1840s.

For one thing, our A.A. program is spiritually centered. Most of us have found enough humility to believe in and depend upon God. We have found that humility by facing the fact that alcoholism is a fatal malady over which we are individually powerless. The Washingtonians, on the contrary, thought drinking to be just another strong habit which could be broken by will power as expressed in pledges, plus the sustaining force of mutual aid through an understanding society of ex-drunks. Apparently they thought little of personality change, and nothing at all of spiritual conversion.

Mutual aid plus pledges did do a lot for them but it wasn't enough; their individual egos still ran riot in every channel save alcohol. Self-

serving forces having no real humility, having little appreciation that the penalty for too much self will is death to the alcoholic, having no Greater Power to serve, finally destroyed the Washingtonians.

Unity Thus Far

When, therefore, we A.A.s look to the future, we must always be asking ourselves if the *spirit* which now binds us together in our common cause will always be stronger than those personal ambitions and desires which tend to drive us apart. So long as the positive forces are greater we cannot fail. Happily, so far, the ties which bind us have been much stronger than those which might break us. Though the individual A.A. is under no human coercion, is at almost perfect personal liberty, we have, nevertheless, achieved a wonderful unity on vital essentials.

For example, "The 12 Steps" of our A.A. program are not crammed clown anybody's throat. They are not sustained by any human authority. Yet we powerfully unite around them because the truth they contain has saved our lives, has opened the door to a new world. Our experience tells us these universal truths work. The anarchy of the individual yields to their persuasion. He sobers up and is led, little by little, to complete agreement with our simple fundamentals.

Ultimately, these truths govern his life and he comes to live under their authority, the most powerful authority known, *ike authority of his full consent, willingly given*. He is ruled, not by people, but by principles, by truths and, as most of us would say, he is ruled by God.

Now some might ask, "What has all this got to do with an A.A. public relations policy?" An older A.A. would say, "Plenty." While experience shows that in A.A. no policy can be created and announced full blown, much less effectively enforced by human authority, we are, nevertheless, faced with the problem of developing a public relations policy and securing for it the only authority we know—that of common understanding and widespread, if not universal, consent. When this consent is secured we can then be sure of ourselves. A.A.s will everywhere put the policy into effect as a matter of course, automatically. Mill we must at first be clear on certain basic principles. And these must have been well tried and tested in our crucible of experience.

In forthcoming articles I shall therefore try to trace the development of our public relations from the very first day we came to public notice. This will show what our experience has already taught us. Then every A.A. can have a real background for constructive thinking on this terribly vital matter—a matter on which we dare not make grave mistakes; upon which, over the years, we cannot afford to become unsound.

ALCOHOLIANA

II

In *Persons and Places*, the first volume of the autobiography of George Santayana, famous philosopher and author of *The Last Puritan*, Santayana describes a classmate of his at Harvard in the '80s of whom he was particularly fond. To the cognoscenti (us) this pen portrait speaks for itself:

"Sanborn was a poet of lyric and modest flights but genuine feeling, not naturally in harmony with the over-intellectualized transcendentalism of Concord, Massachusetts, where his father was a conspicuous member of the Emersonian circle. There was more of Chaucer in him than of Emerson or Wordsworth: even Shakespeare—except in the songs—he found too heavy and rhetorical. These exclusions were involuntary; he was not in the least conceited about them, but on the contrary felt that he was a misfit, shy, ungainly in appearance, and at a disadvantage in the give and take of conversation or action. These maladjustments, a few years later, led to a tragic end. His father had found him a place in the office of *The Spring-*

field Republican. That town offered little to keep up his spirits. He fell into rather undesirable company, as at college he had sometimes succumbed to drink—not often, yet ungracefully. I think I understand the secret of these failings, gross as they seem for a man of such delicate sensibility. He was unhappy, he was poor, he was helpless. The sparkle of a glass, the glitter of a smile, the magic of a touch could suddenly transport him out of this world, with all its stubborn hindrances and dreary conventions, into the Auberger Verte, the green paradise, of his dreams. Yet this escape from reality was necessarily shortlived, and the awakening bitter and remorseful. The strain was too much for Sanborn. His discouragement became melancholia and began to breed hallucinations. He knew only too much about madness, as everybody did in old New England, and he feared it. He cut his throat in his bath with a razor, and we buried him in Concord, in sight of the optimistic Emerson's grave, after a parlor funeral, with the corpse visible, at which his father read a few not very pertinent passages from the Upanishads and the Psalms."

R. S., *Monclair*, N. J.

Flexibility Is Vital

One qualification, however. A policy isn't quite like a fixed truth. A policy is something which can change to meet variable conditions, even though the basic underlying truths upon which it is founded do not change at all. Our policy might, for example, rest upon our 12 Steps for its underlying truths, yet remain reasonably flexible so far as the means or method of its application is concerned.

Hence I earnestly hope thousands of A.A.s start thinking a great deal about these policy matters which are now becoming so important to us. It is out of our discussions, our differences of opinion, our daily experiences, and our general consent that the true answers must finally come.

As an older member I may be able to marshal the facts and help analyze what has happened so far. Perhaps I can even make some suggestions of value for the future. But that is all. Whether we are going to have a clear cut workable public relations policy will finally be determined by all of us together—not by me alone!

(To be continued in the October GRAPEVINE)

Two Classes Who Fade—A Third Finds the Way

(Editor's Note: Here is an analysis of the kinds of people who come to A.A. as seen by one of A.A.'s best non-alcoholic friends—a man who works constantly at helping others and who has guided many men and women to contented sobriety in A.A.)

At times, one wonders what happens to the large groups that enter the A.A. meetings. New faces are seen weekly and after a time they fade out of the picture; others remain and stay within the fold three, four, five months; some—altogether too few—continue on and remain faithful to the end.

To a person observing this phenomenon, he would judge the clientele of A.A. to be divided into three groups:

Temporary Sobriety

In the first group would be those individuals who enter with the best of intentions but are only emotionally balanced for the time being. These applicants grasp only a few steps of the program, especially the one that they should go out and help others. Not having learned the "ABC" of the program, in general they go out to sell a product the nature of which they know little about. Hence when someone contradicts their viewpoint either outside or inside a meeting, they become resentful and in their pride, which has been hurt, they reject in toto the program which they once believed would have been their salvation. They may become the severest critics of A.A. Their short-lived sobriety was merely emotional.

Looking for a Rabbit

As pride dominates the heart of the first group, self-centeredness or selfishness is the driving power of the second group. These enter into the program expecting a rabbit to be pulled from the hat in their case so that they will be able to drink in a sane, sociable manner. To use the parlance of the street, they are merely "on the wagon." Selfishness and the love of their neighbor for God's sake cannot be combined and hence they are not willing or anxious to attempt to bring others into the fold because in the belfry of their brain they have the thought they can drink again. After three, four or five months, these individuals begin to miss meetings, find fault with other members and use every possible excuse for not attending with regularity. As a rule, they drop out of the picture, claiming that A.A. has nothing for them, yet a large number, after a long period of drinking, eventually return.

Contented Sobriety

The third group, to my way of thinking, has what is called contented sobriety. Members of

this group have a sincere desire to stop drinking because their past life has been revolting to them. They have a firm desire within themselves, with the help of God, never to return to the nightmare of yesterday.

Frequently we hear from speakers that they have had a personality change, yet when we boil it down, this personality change is nothing other than intellectual conviction that selfishness is out in this social world. A new sense of values has come to them, coupled with the conviction that a loving God is at the end of the road. These individuals speak of past transgressions.

They smile and laugh or see humor in the things they have done, and what was to them a terrific problem or upset, now provokes their sense of humor. These are the members who do not hurry or race to this one or that one who is drinking and they do not approach a prospect until they themselves first have the program firmly in their minds and are on the straight and narrow path themselves.

In other words, they seek quality rather than quantity in the number of approaches they make. Humility and thankfulness to God are the dominant factors with this group.

VINO VIGNETTES: *Thumbnail A.A. Biographies*

"Really, Pvt. C, I don't know what to do about you!" said the Commanding Officer with a perplexed expression. "We had you confined for thirty days, the day after you get out — you disappear, get drunk and turn up five hundred miles from here. I'm stumped and I'll admit it." The CO looked into Pvt. C's youthful face and sincere blue eyes which now were as troubled as his superior's. "Suppose you were in my place. You had a man with your record brought before you. What would you do?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

"Do you know why you drink so much?"

"No, sir."

"Have you ever tried to do anything about it?"

"Yes, sir."

"What?"

"Tried not to drink, sir."

"Tell me about it."

"I don't know what to tell, sir. I've tried not to drink and I just don't seem to be able to stop. That's all there is to it, sir."

"How about overseas? Do you want to go overseas?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

In a few weeks Pvt. C was in Africa. The pattern didn't change — he'd be assigned to an outfit, get drunk, be locked up for a while and then sent back to a replacement pool. In a short time the whole procedure would be repeated. There were only slight variations — one stretch of three months for selling mattress covers to buy booze and a couple of attacks of the "DTs" when he was tossed in the "nut" ward. Finally the Army gave up all idea of making Pvt. C into a good combat soldier.

A "board" went over Pvt. C's case and decided to give him a "Blue Discharge" — "a discharge from the service without honor for excessive drunkenness," and he was ordered back to the States. In a matter of a few weeks, Pvt. C

emerged from the Redistribution Center at Fort Dix with his "Blue Discharge" in one pocket and a hundred and ninety dollars in the other. Civilian C got very drunk immediately. In a matter of hours or days, it didn't matter which, he arrived at his brother's home where, his wife and small daughter had been living.

For a while his brother tolerated the drinking until C's condition became so bad he was asked to leave. C sobered sufficiently to get his old pre-war job back. The first week he worked four days, the second two and the third—his last—one full day. C decided there was no use trying—he might as well just stay in a barroom. His money gave out but for over a month he managed to sponge enough drinks to stay drunk the entire time.

Eventually the friendly bartender made arrangements to send C to Bellevue. Someone intervened and took him home. After a few days C pulled himself together and went to the Veterans' Bureau in New York, where he shakily informed his interviewer he must get work. Seeing his condition, the interviewer suggested he was not in shape to take a job if he found one and that he might get some help at the A.A. Clubhouse at 405 West 41st Street.

C was so desperate he would have gone to the Zoo and talked to the lions if anyone had suggested they could help him. At the Clubhouse he talked to various AAs.

That was three months ago. C has been employed ever since, and "dry." He says he feels he's got the A.A. program pretty well fixed in his mind but he's got to work to keep it there, and he never fails to drop in at the Clubhouse every day and he finds out something new almost every time he does. C is beginning to see the picture of a whole new life ahead of him and he wants to help other guys who were as mixed up as he was. *C. C., Manhattan*

Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home or Abroad

(Editor's Note: With the cessation of hostilities, Mail Call is thrown open to all A.A.s, those still far away with the victorious armed forces, those returning to civil life, and those on the home front who face the same fight.)

Would They Try Again?

Dear Editor: As a point of interest I would like to say that it is my opinion that too many of us say that we have difficulty understanding or getting some one or more of the last 11 Steps. I firmly believe that if all adherents had the proper conviction on the 1st Step, namely, that we are powerless over alcohol, would there ever be any that would go out and try all over again?

C. B. C., Philadelphia

After Three Months

My impressions of A.A., after being a member for three months:

I doubt whether anyone, except myself, realized how necessary such a contact had become. Following a nine-month period of no drinking, during which I was most unhappy, I decided that it would be possible to start again, holding it under control. Strangely, I was encouraged by my friends who mistakenly insisted that, I was not an alcoholic, and should not be deprived of this pleasure. For the next six months I seemed to be progressing satisfactorily—never taking more than two bottles of beer or a few glasses of wine each day. One evening, however, after this quota I surreptitiously drained a small vestige of rum remaining in a bottle, and almost immediately came the thought, "This is not so good!" Although I didn't realize it, after that action (A.A.s would say it was that first bottle of beer) I was in danger. You see, I was a lone and secret drinker, the very worst of all. From then on, the old habit reasserted itself, and while I was able to hold it within bounds of detection I knew that probably it wouldn't be possible for long. One day I had several small glasses of rum before going to work, which terrified me. After this I decided to seriously consider the A.A. program. I had attended meetings before but always with the mental reservation that I would not enroll myself until I was convinced I really needed it. I harbored the delusion that this habit could be controlled by intelligent analysis and will power.

Several of the women members got in touch with me but I was entirely unable to talk with them. Emotional conflicts were making it difficult for me to do anything except not take a drink. I found the open meetings more beneficial for there I could sit quietly and try to understand what force prompted these speakers to express themselves so candidly and with such sincerity. Although I am a person of no par-

ticular religious conviction, it gradually occurred to me that here I was finding access to a new philosophy of living, which is the essence of all religion. I have not tried to completely analyze the 12 Steps or even the book, in its entirety, for to me the three essentials are honesty, humility and faith. Upon these I have set my standard, and I am making progress.

The oft discussed personality change I have already experienced. Courage, through the help of God, has been granted me, at a time when I need it most, to face a personal crisis. Humility has replaced arrogance and the desire for unselfish action has superseded egocentric proclivities. I am not unaware of the fact that there is a long way to go, for as I look back on my life I see it followed an alcoholic pattern from the very first drink. The opportunity to make amends for a sadly messed up life has come late but I am immeasurably grateful that it came before total disintegration of a character and personality that had potentialities for accomplishment.

An inscription on a wall at the American Museum of Natural History seems to me a most admirable expression of philosophical encouragement. I quote, in part:

"Only they are fit to live,
Who do not fear to die,
Nor are they fit to die
Who shrink from the joy of life, and
the duty of life."

A. F., New York City

Humility Necessary

Dear Editor: There is so much in the A.A. program for sobriety or plan for living, commonly called the 12 Steps, that it is difficult for anyone to determine what particular step is the most important.

Dr. W. D. Silkworth, after treating more than 10,000 patients suffering from the disease of alcoholism... has arrived at the conclusion that "belief in a power greater than oneself" appears "to be the essential principle of A.A."... I conceive "belief in a power greater than oneself" to be supreme and perfect logic—complete humility. It is the kind of logic that is irrefutable. But this is usually very difficult for an alcoholic to take completely and honestly because the thoughts of an alcoholic are often quite materialistic. He thinks first about his economic predicament, his marital difficulties or his physical ailments and hasn't much stomach for metaphysics. It is a hard dose to take, involving as it does belief in something upon which science and philosophy have as yet been able to cast but little illumination. But if the alcoholic can take that all-important 2nd

Step and masticate it to his complete satisfaction he will have solved the problem of alcoholism.

In my humble opinion, the 2nd Step is essential, but of course this is not necessarily the opinion of A.A. as a whole.

H. C. M., Pelham, N. Y.

Two Strikes to Start

Dear Editor: The more I study "slips" in an effort to understand their causes, the more firmly I believe that the two most common reasons for them are: Doubt about being an alcoholic; and, selfishness. Anybody who is still wondering whether or not he's alcoholic certainly has at least one strike against him insofar as drinking goes. As long as he has that doubt he's almost sure to try it "just once more." Likewise, anybody who is so selfish he won't stir himself to go out and try to help someone else has a strike or two against himself, because he's bound to be thinking about himself most of the time. That's fatal for us. Our hope lies in getting out of ourselves, rather than dwelling on ourselves, as we have during the 10 or 20 or 30 years of our drinking.

J. T., San Francisco, Cal.

From a U. S. Marine

In the July 1945 issue we published a letter from an A.A., a sergeant of Marines in the Pacific, with whom we have since had the good fortune to carry on an active correspondence. We think part of his most recent letter should appear here:

"I received your last letter and answered it immediately, but because we were moving I was unable to mail it. In the meantime, we had some terrific rainfalls with the result that your letter and others were waterlogged and had to be destroyed. Now I am at my new base.

"The little rock I was on was called Ie Shima and was the place where Ernie Pyle was killed. Being a small rock and just off the west coast of Okinawa, it was a fairly easy target and as a result was pretty hot with air raids and alerts. I am in Okinawa now. It's much nicer here—much like our own country with hills and ravines, mountains and valleys and" plenty of foliage and pine trees. We have lots of new equipment, including a new mess hall with all its accessories, ice cream machine and all. There are still a number of enemy stragglers around which hinders me from doing the exploring I'd like to do—such as into the mountains and down the valleys and along the rocky coast line. Besides I have enough work to do to take up most of my time."

Our friend goes on to discuss some of his
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ROCHESTER PREPARES NOVICES FOR GROUP PARTICIPATION

(Editor's Noli: This is the third in a continuing series of articles outlining the various indoctrination plans followed by different groups throughout the country. In forthcoming issues, methods used in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Cleveland will be presented.)

Dear Editor: The educational plan of the Wilson Club of St. Louis which was outlined in the June number of *The Grapevine* was read by the members of the Genesee Group of Rochester, New York, with considerable interest. As the education of our "novices" has been the chief concern of our group since its inception a year ago, we were all particularly keen to know that other groups are accenting that feature of group activity which we believe to be of the greatest importance.

Our Genesee Group plan utilizes the same technique as the St. Louis Group but has the additional, or more accurately, preliminary feature which seems to us of sufficient importance to justify this communication. We hope to invite comment, suggestions or criticisms from other groups or individuals who may have ideas along this line or who may have some other method of instruction which they are now employing. From such an interchange of thoughts and opinions through the medium of your columns much good may come. It might even be possible to evolve from such discussion a coordinated general plan or framework within which all A.A. groups could work. Certainly, "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Our plan differs from the Wilson Club plan in this respect: Our prospects or novices, as we call them, are given a personal "canvass or

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headway with other alcoholics where well meaning individuals without the common background have completely failed.

Same Problem for All

Will a special technique or the formation of special veterans' groups be necessary to convince the border-line, or even the full-fledged, alcoholic veteran that he has a drinking problem and that we in A.A. have perhaps an answer? Personally, we think not and doubt the wisdom of special groups. The main problem for any alcoholic is the same regardless of former environment, occupation, economic condition, social status, etc., and while other A.A.s who have seen service in the armed forces should be of great assistance in getting a veteran started, we believe the sooner he learns to mix with all his fellow A.A.s, the sooner will he make the adjustments necessary for permanent sobriety.

A. T., *Manhattan*

workout" by their sponsor or sponsors before they are permitted to attend a group meeting. These personal talks follow the line set forth in a booklet prepared by our group for that purpose. It was designed to assist in bringing a prospective candidate up to his 'first meeting with a thorough knowledge of the aims and purposes of A.A. and the obligations he will have to impose upon himself if he undertakes membership in our group. It has been our observation that bringing men into the group indiscriminately, and without adequate preliminary training and information, can be a source of considerable grief and a cause of great harm to the general morale of the group itself. We feel that unless a man, after a course of instruction and an intelligent presentation of the case for the A.A. life, has accepted it without any reservation, he should not be included in a group membership. When his sponsors feel that the novice has a fair working knowledge of A.A.'s objectives and a sufficient grasp of its fundamentals, he is then brought to his first group meeting.

The time when the novice's progress has reached the point of acceptance of the program varies according to his mental capacity, his eagerness to learn and the sincerity of his self-examination. It is not measured by the yardstick of any lapse of time or the length of his sobriety. The sponsor's judgment of when his novice is ready is accepted by the group as final and the sponsor then brings him to his first meeting. There he listens to four successive talks based on the 12 Steps and the Four Absolutes. There are twenty-minute talks given by older members of the group and the steps, for convenience and brevity, are divided into four sections. The first three steps constitute the text of the first talk. The next four, the second; the next four, the third; and the last step is considered to be entitled to a full evening's discussion by itself.

Following these constructive talks, a general summary is then given of the whole program. From this point on the novice is on his own and his growth and development in A.A. will depend entirely on his own sincerity and his active participation in all the group's affairs.

We feel that we have at least given him an opportunity to understand what A.A. is and it is his free choice from that point on as to how successful he will be.

Of course, this plan is not a rigid one nor is it exclusive, but we have found in practice, at least in our own group, that it has to a great extent, not completely, of course, eliminated failures and has erased from our vocabulary

that distasteful, inaccurate and much overworked word "slip."

It also helps us to develop a sense of leadership among our members, a prime essential in the operation of any successful group. We feel that the objective to which such leadership must devote itself is not, as some may think, a vague, idealistic formula. On the contrary, it is the essence of our way of life, the only way worthy of a free man. The basic concept of the A.A. way of life is the integrity and dignity of the individual human being. This same idea is the core of the Declaration of Independence and the principal concern of our Bill of Rights.

A.A.'s 12 Steps comprise the alcoholic's "Declaration of Independence."

M. L., *Genesee Group, Rochester, N. Y.*

ONE DAY AT A TIME

Dear Editor: Here is an article I clipped from *Read Magazine*, which in turn reprinted it from *The Sunbury (Pennsylvania) Daily Item*.

It embraces so many A.A. teachings and principles, it could very, well have been written by an A.A. member. I think it also dovetails very nicely with the practice of taking A.A. on a twenty-four hour basis.

H. W., *Detroit, East Side Group*

"Life is given to us in allotments of one day at a time. The poorest has no less, the richest no more. Therefore, one day at a time should we live our lives and not try to take in more territory. Anybody can endure for twenty-four hours the burdens and griefs which would kill, if continued over a lifetime.

"On the same principle of day-by-day should we look to the improvement of mind, the development of body, the stiffening of will. Too often, vast plans for all these good resolutions fall to pieces because the individual has bitten off more than he can chew.

"Master one lesson well before passing on to the next. Build one good habit into the network of your responses, before taking on others. See one good resolution through to the end.

"At the same slow-but-sure pace, practice charity. The colossal needs of our day appall us; we have so little to give. But somewhere at hand there is a small need well within our means. Give to that.

"One good turn a day, the Boy Scouts call it. The sum total of these would make a ponderous book. Yet it is being written on the basis of one a day.

"And, just for good measure, do each day at least one thing you'd prefer not to do. This has the effect of stretching the moral muscles.

"Take a hint from Mother Nature, who limits her children to one breath, one meal, one heartbeat, one step at time. Don't crowd tomorrow. Don't drag yesterday behind you."

A.A. 's Country-Wide News Circuit

Dr. C. Dudley Saul, head physician of the medical staff of St. Luke's Hospital, Philadelphia, who pioneered in winning medical recognition for A.A., recently told about 65 law enforcement and welfare officials, clergymen and doctors, at a meeting of A.A. in Burlington, Vt., that close cooperation of the medical profession, clergy, laity and A.A. are needed today to inform the public of the true nature of "Public Enemy No. 4—alcoholism."

Beaver College, Jenkintown, Pa., has loaned a room to A.A. for the bi-weekly meetings, attended by members from Montgomery County.

Mexico's first group is in Monterrey... Other new groups are Valdosta, Ga.; Baldwin, L. I., N. Y.; Meriden, Conn... Dorchester, Mass., A.A.s, who lately celebrated their first anniversary, are planning a large, get-together in their home-town with members from several Eastern seaboard states... Oklahoma City A.A.s have just received their charter from the secretary of state to operate in that city and throughout the state... Davenport, Iowa, now has its own group, launched by members from Iowa City, Cedar Rapids and Burlington... From the Sioux City group have gone zealous members who established groups at Moline, Ill.; Gary, Ind.; Mitchell, S. D.; Spirit Lake, Iowa; Rapid City, S. D., and Pender, Neb.

The Ohio towns of Sandusky, Fremont, Bellevue, Monroeville, Norwalk, Milan and Wakeman were represented at a dinner of the Bellevue and Norwalk groups in Norwalk. Among the guests were clergymen, city, industrial and police officials.

The Northwest is rapidly expanding, with Washington stepping out in the foreground. Seattle now has two groups; Spokane is developing so swiftly that the members are now seeking a large home suitable for a permanent clubhouse; and Everett A.A.s are the latest to join the ranks and hold their own meetings.

Gov. Chauncey Sparks of Alabama has appointed members of a state commission "for education on alcoholism," which was created by the 1945 legislature under the sponsorship of A.A. The commission is charged "with the power to prepare and administer a program for the rehabilitation of alcoholics and the education of the public with respect to dealing with alcoholism as a disease."

Speaking before the year-old Orlando, Fla., group, Lt. Col. John N. Cotton, chief of neuropsychiatry, Welsh Convalescent Hospital, Daytona Beach, accented A.A.'s contribution to in-

dividual communities and thus to the nation as a whole, from a sociological point of view.

The Kansas press has been having some good-natured fun writing about the Topeka A.A. group and its new clubhouse. The Sunflower state has been legally dry since 1880. Today, the only legal beverages have no more than 3.2 per cent alcoholic voltage to induce consumption. Topeka, home of 67,833 persons, bastion of state dry laws and lawmakers, has had an A.A. group since 1943 and, says one journalist, "Adding to doubts of Topekans who have seen whiskey bottles tossed on the statehouse grounds and lying along Kansas Avenue, A.A. has now moved into the finest clubrooms in the city." The newsmen carefully mention the fact that A.A. isn't at all interested in whiskey from a prohibition angle, that it is dedicated to the rehabilitation of alcoholics who honestly want to recover.

Kansas City, Kan., is another of the groups to buy its own clubhouse. Located at 1925 North Eleventh Street, the former mansion has had partitions ripped out downstairs, reducing the once many-roomed house into a meeting hall, while upstairs four rooms remain for general use.

Last month the Rome-Utica (N. Y.) group with 31 regular members was 18 months old and fittingly celebrated the occasion with a dinner and meeting at the Hotel Utica which drew an attendance of about 75. As reported by Jim C., chairman of the event, 14 groups were represented among the people attending, with guests from as far as Cleveland and Louisville. Dick S., Cleveland, was the principal speaker. Commenting editorially on the meeting, the *Utica Observer-Dispatch* said in part: "That gathering of Alcoholics Anonymous in Utica is significant. Members of the organization are against alcohol but unlike most campaigns against the beverage, the opposition is wholly an individual problem. The member aims to help himself and to assist others only as they desire to be helped on a purely voluntary basis. This movement is widespread, for members came from two states and a dozen or more cities."

In Tonawanda, N. Y., the non-alcoholic wives of A.A.s have organized under the name of Alcoholics Anonymous Auxiliary; these A.A.A.s are proving of tremendous help to nervous wives of new A.A. members... After representatives of New England A.A.s had talked with him, Mayor Albert W. Glynn of Haverhill, Mass., stated that the "splendid success of A.A. these past 10 years prompts me to offer every

encouragement to the group now forming in Haverhill"... "Their Work and Ours" was the title of an address given by a Jacksonville, Fla., member before the Council of Social Agencies.

The Des Moines, Iowa, A.A.s are making preparations for their second anniversary meeting to be held Oct. 28. Marty M. is scheduled as principal guest speaker. But, according to the *A.A. Tribune*, written by "Hildagarde;" there's one cause for worry. Scaling capacity of the place where the speaking program will be held is 800, and that may not be enough.... A recent issue of the *Camel Club Chronicle*, printed in Marshalltown, Iowa, was given over to quotes from a talk by one of the members of the Waterloo group, including these words:... "I like to feel that... we A.A.s are the individuals chosen by God to learn all the symptoms of the disease so that we have the personal knowledge to successfully apply the remedy for the many thousands who will need our assistance in the future. It's been a long and tough course, and it all will have been worthwhile only if we go forth to apply its principles just as the doctor, the lawyer, the minister or the priest would do in his own field... " Says *The Toss Pot*, printed in Charleston, W. Va., "What we need is more brain and less brayin'." From the same publication, the reader learns that Charleston is now booming along with several closed group meetings and one central group open meeting a week, with still another new group about to get started.

During the war, A.A. meetings were held in many industrial plants; trade journals wrote about the thousands of man-hours salvaged through A.A. At one of the Henry Kaiser shipyards on the West coast one A.A. alone was responsible for saving 8,000 man-hours per ship by suggesting improved methods of doing work. Three-fourths of the A.A.s there had jobs with the great shipbuilding firm which placed them in supervisory capacities. One top executive spoke of ten key men in one yard "without whose help we couldn't have delivered Hull One."

IF YOU MOVE

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Some of the Problems of 12th Step Work

After something more than two years of 12th Step work, it appears that the chances of success depend very largely on the prospect. However, results are so non-predictable that I frequently find myself trying to spread a little light when the patient is not willing to take the 1st Step.

As we all know, most hangovers can be helped by a patient listener who will be consistently sympathetic and not too demanding. Many times the victim will agree to and promise almost anything in order to get what he wants at the minute, be it "a last drink" or some new arguments to use with those he has let down for the 'steenth time. We do run into, rarely, youngsters who are ready and able to accept the experience of older people, but for the most part it seems that each 12th Step effort has to be tempered to suit the individual.

An ideal combination to find in a prospect would include a recent and mildly disastrous bender, a combination of local problems to be met that involve home and other obligations to be faced by a socially minded and intelligent individual.

Conversely, the knottiest problems are personal pride which shows up as an almost impenetrable reserve or else a species of belligerency, an unwillingness to face the issues and to tell the truth, plus the many fears, real or unreal, that follow excessive drinking.

Example is a powerful help and if the prospect can be brought in contact with a number of individuals whose fundamental characteristics are like his own and who have emerged from bondage, the prospect will see very quickly that others like him have succeeded and he is frequently aware of an unspoken challenge to do likewise.

Some newcomers respond to a logical review

of their lives and actions together with definite suggestions for changing the pattern, while others, whose current despair offsets their ability to reason with active faith in life or themselves, respond to emotional prodding. The latter type frequently reacts favorably to a direct spiritual approach.

One of the most effective comparisons I have heard is to picture the individual's life complicated by one new problem each time he goes on a binge as against the vastly improved condition resulting from no new problems and the improvement made by time and abstinence in clearing up old ones.

It is my belief that the key to success in 12th Step work is a humble realization that our efforts alone are of small avail and that the most we can contribute is a real sympathy for our distressed brother or sister, supplemented by our sure knowledge that God has all the tools needed to help every individual who earnestly seeks His aid.

M. A. C., Forest Hills, N. Y.

Mail Call

(Continued from Page 5)

thoughts about A.A., the probable reasons for "slips" and the danger of uncontrolled temper. His remarks on this last subject seem very much to the point:

"Ever since I attended my first meeting I knew that I would have to curb my temper if I wanted success (sobriety) and since I want that more than anything else in the world I pray daily that God will grant me patience and help me control my temper. I've been quite successful along this line and have, gained twofold results—first, I've removed another obstacle to a life of complete contentment and second I get along with my family, as well as my fellow men; 100% better. I believe a temper is an asset when it is well bridled. No, I'm not cocky—either over my controlled temper or over two years of sobriety—if I were, I would not be praying daily for help. I need it.

"Just recently A.A. saved my life—some day I'll tell you about it. Thanks once again to A.A. that I'm here. D. F. M., Sgt., USMCR

The Pleasures of Reading

The following books have been read and studied by many A.A. member:

Careful reading of this list will help us to understand the proposition that the universe is lawful. Most of us have learned the hard way how much we must pay in spirit, health, and fears as well as money for breaking any of these laws.

Within the covers of the books listed below many A.A.s have found knowledge that serves as a guide in happy living.

Always give your bookseller the title, author, and publisher. You will get your book much more quickly.

Alcoholics Anonymous (Works Publishing Co., \$3.50)

Alcohol—One Man's Meat by Strecher and Chambers (Macmillan Co., \$2.50)

How Never to Be Tired by Marie Beynon Ray (Bobbs-Merrill Co., \$2.50)

Lost Weekend by Charles Jackson (Farrar & Rinehart, \$2.50)

Man Against Himself by Karl A. Menninger (Harcourt, Brace & Co., \$3.75)

On Being a Real Person by Harry Emerson Fosdick (Harper & Brothers, \$2.50)

Psychology of Christian Personality by Ernest M. Ligon (Macmillan Co., \$3)

Release from Nervous Tension by David Harold Fink, M. D. (Simon & Schuster, \$2)

Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis (Macmillan Co., \$1.50)

Tell It to the Padre by Robert W. Searle (Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., \$1)

The Soul's Sincere Desire by Glenn Clark (Little, Brown & Co., \$1.50)

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