

A. A.  
Tradition

*“Our experience has taught us . . .”*

An A.A. Publication  
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**Alcoholics Anonymous has but one purpose:  
To help the sick alcoholic recover if he wishes.**

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**Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on any  
controversial subject nor does it oppose anyone.**

## FOREWORD

How shall we AA's best preserve **our unity**? That is the subject of this booklet.

When an alcoholic applies the "Twelve Steps" of our Recovery Program to his personal life, his *disintegration* stops and his *unification* begins. The Power which now holds him together in one piece overcomes those forces which had rent him apart.

Exactly the same principle applies to each A.A. Group and to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. So long as the ties which bind us together prove far stronger than those forces which would divide us if they could, all will be well. We shall be secure as a movement; our essential unity will remain a certainty.

If, as A.A. members, we can each refuse public prestige and renounce any desire for personal power; if, as a movement, we insist on remaining poor, so avoiding disputes about extensive property and its management; if we steadfastly decline all political, sectarian, or other alliances, we shall avoid internal division and public notoriety; if, as a movement, we remain a spiritual entity concerned only with carrying our message to fellow sufferers without charge or obligation; then only can we most effectively complete our mission. It is becoming ever so clear that we ought never accept even the most alluring temporary benefits if these should consist of considerable sums of money, or could involve us in controversial alliances and endorsements, or might tempt some of us to accept, as A.A. members, personal publicity by press or radio. Unity is so vital to us AA's that we cannot risk those attitudes and practices which have sometimes demoralized other forms of human society. Thus far we have succeeded because we have been different. May we continue to be so!

But, A.A. unity cannot automatically preserve itself. Like personal recovery, we shall always have to work to maintain it. Here, too, we surely need honesty, humility, open-mindedness, unselfishness, and, above all-vigilance. So we who are older in A.A. beg you who are newer that you ponder carefully the experience we have already had of trying to work and live together. We would like each AA to become just as much aware of those disturbing tendencies which endanger us as a whole as he is conscious of those personal defects which threaten

## ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS TRADITION : TWELVE POINTS TO ASSURE OUR FUTURE

his own sobriety and peace of mind. For whole movements have, before now, gone on benders, too!

Of course it is not intended that each AA become a "viewer with alarm for the mood of the movement" or that we embark on a confession of the sins of our brother AA's against us. That kind of righteousness can be disruptive. We need not become Pharisees. But each of us can search his conscience to see if he is doing anything which could harm our essential solidarity. Should we each do this honestly, the collective conscience of our A.A. movement will be true.

The "12 Points of A.A. Tradition" reproduced herein is our first attempt to state sound principles of Group conduct and public relations. As one of the originators of AA, I was asked to publish these "Points" together with supporting articles aerially in our principal monthly journal, *The A.A. Grapevine*. Many AA's already feel that these "12 Traditions" are sound enough to become the basic guide and protection for A.A. as a whole; that we ought to apply them as seriously to our Group life as we do the "12 Recovery Steps" to ourselves individually. Of this, it will take time to tell.

Meanwhile, it will be much appreciated if every AA, as an aid to his own thinking, will read these pieces, giving special attention to the articles on anonymity (recently revised), personal government, the use of money in A.A., and our relation to so-called "outside enterprise" because, at the moment, our Group problems seem to center mostly on these vital issues.

In good season I hope we shall see that sound traditions are as important to the A.A. movement as our "12 Recovery Steps" are to the individual alcoholic. May we never forget that without permanent unity we can offer little lasting relief to those scores of thousands yet to join us in their quest for freedom.

BILL

Nobody invented Alcoholics Anonymous. It grew. Trial and error has produced a rich experience. Little by little we have been adopting the lessons of that experience, first as policy and then as tradition. That process still goes on and we hope it never stops. Should we ever harden too much, the letter might crush the spirit. We could victimize ourselves by petty rules and prohibitions; we could imagine that we had said the last word. We might even be asking alcoholics to accept our rigid ideas or stay away. May we never stifle progress like that!

Yet the lessons of our experience count for a great deal. We now have had years of vast acquaintance with the problem of living and working together. If we can succeed in this adventure-and keep succeeding-then, and only then, will our future be secure.

Since personal calamity holds us in bondage no more, our most challenging concern has become the future of Alcoholics Anonymous; how to preserve among us AA's such a powerful unity that neither weakness of persons nor the strain and strife of these troubled times can harm our common cause. We know that Alcoholics Anonymous must continue to live. Else, save few exceptions, we and our brother alcoholics throughout the world will surely resume the hopeless journey to oblivion.

Almost any AA can tell you what our group problems are. Fundamentally they have to do with our relations, one with the other, and with the world outside. They involve relations of the AA to his group, the relation of his group to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, and the place of Alcoholics Anonymous in that troubled sea called Modern Society. where all of humankind must presently shipwreck or find haven. Terribly-relevant is the problem of our basic structure and our attitude toward those ever pressing questions of leadership, money, and authority. The future may well depend on how we feel and act about things that are controversial and how we regard our public relations. Our final destiny will almost surely hang upon what we presently decide to do with these danger fraught issues!

Now comes the crux of our discussion. It is this: Have we yet acquired sufficient experience to state clear-cut policies on these, our chief concerns; can we now declare general principles which could grow into vital traditions-traditions sustained in the heart of each AA by his own deep conviction and by the common consent of his fellows? That is the question. Though full answer to all our perplexities may never be found, I'm sure we have come at last to a vantage point whence we can discern the main outlines of a body of tradition; which, God willing, can stand us an effective guard against all the ravages of time and circumstance,

Acting upon the persistent urge of old A.A. friends, and upon the conviction that general agreement and consent among our members is now possible, I shall venture to place in words these suggestions for An Alcoholics Anonymous Tradition of Relations-Twelve Points to Assure Our Future:

*Our A.A. experience has taught us that:*

1.--Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

2.-For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority-n loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience.

3.-Our membership ought to include all who suffer alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. Group, provided that, as a Group, they have no other affiliation.

4.-With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. Group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the Trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

5.--Each Alcoholics Anonymous Group ought to be a spiritual entity having *but* one primary purpose-that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6.-Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An AA. Group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the Groups. Hence such facilities ought not use the A.A. name. Their *management should* be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A.- and medically supervised. While an A.A. Group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. Group can bind itself to no one.

7.-The A.A. Groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each Group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by Groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then too, we view with much *concern* those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8.-Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. "12th Step" work is never to be paid for.

9.-Each AA. Group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small Group may elect its Secretary, the large Group its Rotating Committee, and the Groups of a large Metropolitan area their Central or Intergroup Committee, which often employs a full-time Secretary. The Trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation are, in effect, our AA. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary AA. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the Groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, The A.A. *Grapevine*. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

10.-No AA. Group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA., express any opinion on outside controversial issues-particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous Groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

11.-Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12.-And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of Anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him Who presides over us all.

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May it be urged that while these principles have been stated in quite positive language, they are still only suggestions for our future. We of Alcoholics Anonymous have never enthusiastically responded to any assumption of personal authority. Perhaps it is well for A.A. that this is true. So I offer these suggestions neither as one man's dictum nor as a creed of any kind, but rather as a first attempt to portray that Group Ideal toward which we have assuredly been led by a Higher Power these ten years past.

## WHO IS A MEMBER OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS?

The first edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* makes this brief statement about membership: "The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted." This expressed our feeling as of 1939, the year our book was published.

Since that day all kinds of experiments with membership have been tried. The number of membership rules which have been made (and mostly broken!) are legion. Two or three years ago the General Office asked the groups to list their membership rules and send them in. After they arrived we set them all down. They took a great many sheets of paper. A little reflection upon these many rules brought us to an astonishing conclusion. If all of these edicts had been in force everywhere at once it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined Alcoholics Anonymous. About nine-tenths of our oldest and best members could never have got by!

In some cases we would have been too discouraged by the demands made upon us. Most of the early members of A.A. would have been thrown out because they slipped too much, because their morals were too bad, because they had mental as well as alcoholic difficulties. Or, believe it or not, because they did not come from the so-called better classes of society. We oldsters could have been excluded for our failure to read the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* or the refusal of our sponsor to vouch for us as a candidate. And so on ad infinitum. The way our "worthy" alcoholics have sometime tried to judge the "less worthy" is, as we look back on it, rather comical. Imagine, if you can, one alcoholic judging another!

At one time or another most AA. Groups go on rule-making benders. Naturally enough, too, as a Group commences to grow rapidly it is confronted with many alarming problems. Panhandlers begin to panhandle. Members get drunk and sometimes get others drunk with them. Those with mental difficulties throw depressions or break out into paranoid denunciations of fellow members. Gossips gossip, and righteously denounce the local Wolves and Red Riding Hoods. Newcomers argue that they aren't alcoholics at all. but keep coming around anyway. "Slipees" trade on the fair name of A.A., in order to get themselves jobs. Others refuse to accept all the 12 Steps of the Recovery Program. Some go still further, saying that the "God business" is bunk and quite unnecessary. Under these-conditions our conservative program-abiding members get scared. These appalling conditions must be controlled, they think. Else A.A. will surely go to rack and ruin. They view with alarm for the good of the movement!

At this point the Group enters the rule and regulation phase. Charters, by-laws and membership rules are excitedly passed and authority is granted committees to filter out undesirables and discipline the evildoers. Then the Group Elders, now clothed with authority, commence to get busy. Recalcitrants are cast into the outer darkness, respectable busybodies throw stones at the sinners. As for the so-called sinners, they either insist on staying around, or else they form a new Group of their own. Or maybe they join a

more congenial and less intolerant crowd in their neighborhood. The Elders soon discover that the rules and regulations aren't working very well. Most attempts at enforcement generate such waves of dissension and intolerance in the Group that this condition is presently recognized to be worse for the Group life than the very worst that the worst ever did.

After a time fear and intolerance subside. The Group survives unscathed. Everybody has learned a great deal. So it is, that few of us are any longer afraid of what any newcomer can do to our A.A. reputation or effectiveness. Those who slip, those who panhandle, those who scandalize, those with mental twists, those who rebel at the program, those who trade on the A.A. reputation—all such persons seldom harm an A.A. Group for long. Some of these have become our most respected and best loved. Some have remained to try our patience, sober nevertheless. Others have drifted away. We have begun to regard these ones not as menaces, but rather as our teachers. They oblige us to cultivate patience, tolerance and humility. We finally see that they are only people sicker than the rest of us. that we who condemn them are the Pharisees whose false righteousness does our Group the deeper spiritual damage.

Every older AA shudders when he remembers the names of persons he once condemned; people he confidently predicted would never sober up; persons he was sure ought to be thrown out of A.A. for the good of the movement. Now that some of these very persons have been sober for years, and may be numbered among his best friends, the oldtimer thinks to himself "What if everybody had judged these people as I once did? What if A.A. had slammed its door in their faces? Where would they be now?"

That is why we all judge the newcomer less and less. If alcohol is an uncontrollable problem to him and he wishes to do something about it, that is enough for us. We care not whether his case is severe or light, whether his morals are good or bad, whether he has other complications or not. Our A.A. door stands wide open, and if he passes through it and commences to do anything at all about his problem, he is considered a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. He signs nothing, agrees to nothing, promises nothing. We demand nothing. He joins us on his own say so. Nowadays, in most Groups, he doesn't even have to admit he is an alcoholic. He can join A.A. on the mere suspicion that he may be one, that he may already show the fatal symptoms of our malady.

Of course this is not the universal state of affairs throughout A.A. Membership rules still exist. If a member persists in coming to meetings drunk he may be led outside: we may ask someone to take him away. But in most Groups he can come back next day, if sober. Though he may be thrown out of a club, nobody thinks of throwing him out of A.A. He is a member as long as he says he is. While this broad concept of A.A. membership is not yet unanimous, it does represent the main current of A.A. thought today. We do not wish to deny anyone his chance to recover from alcoholism. We wish to be just as inclusive as we can, never exclusive.

Perhaps this trend signifies something much deeper than a mere change of attitude on the question of membership. Perhaps it means that we are losing all fear of those violent emotional storms which sometimes cross our alcoholic world: perhaps it bespeaks our confidence that every storm will be followed by a calm; a calm which is more understanding, more compassionate, more tolerant than any we ever knew before.

## ANONYMITY – PART ONE

In the years that lie ahead the principle of anonymity will undoubtedly become a part of our vital tradition. Even today we sense its practical value. But more important still, we are beginning to feel that the word “anonymous” has for us an immense spiritual significance. Subtly but powerfully it reminds us that we are always to place principles before personalities; that we have renounced personal glorification in public; that our movement not only preaches, but actually practices a true humility. That the practice of anonymity in our public relations has already had a profound effect upon us, and upon our millions of friends in the outside world, there can hardly be doubt. Anonymity is already a cornerstone of our public relations policy.

How this idea first originated and subsequently took hold of us is an interesting bit of A.A. history. In the years before the publication of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, we had no name. Nameless, formless, our essential principles of recovery still under debate and test, we were just a group of drinkers groping our way along what we hoped would be the road to freedom. Once we became sure that our feet were set on the right track we decided upon a book in which we could tell other alcoholics the good news. As the book took form we inscribed in it the **essence** of our experience. It was the product of thousands of hours of discussion. It truly represented the collective voice, heart and conscience of those of us who had pioneered the first four years of A.A.

As the day of publication approached we racked our brains to find a suitable name for the volume. We must have considered at least two hundred titles. Thinking up titles and voting upon them at meetings became one of our main activities. A great welter of discussion and argument finally narrowed our choice to a single pair of names. Should we call our new book *The Way Out* or should we call it *Alcoholics Anonymous*? That was the final question. A last minute vote was taken by the Akron and New York Groups. By a narrow majority the verdict was for naming our book *The Way Out*. Just before we went to print somebody suggested there might be other books having the same title. One of our early lone members (dear old Fitz M., who then lived in Washington) went over to the Library of Congress to investigate. He found exactly 12 books already titled *The Way Out*. When this information was passed around, we shivered at the possibility of being the “13th Way Out.” So *Alcoholics Anonymous* became first choice. That’s how we got a name for our book of experience, a name for our movement and, as we are now beginning to see a tradition of the greatest spiritual import. God does move in mysterious ways His wonders to perform!

In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* there are only three references to the principle of anonymity. The foreword of our first edition states: “Being mostly business or professional folk some of us could not carry on our occupations if known” and “When writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, we urge each of our fellowship to omit his personal name, designating himself instead as ‘a member of Alcoholics Anonymous,’” and then, “very earnestly we ask the press also to observe this request for otherwise we shall be greatly handicapped.”

Since the publication of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in 1939 hundreds of A.A. Groups have been formed. Every one of them asks these questions: “Just, how anonymous are we supposed to be?” and “After all, what good is this principle of anonymity anyway?” To a great extent each group has settled upon its own interpretation. Naturally enough wide differences of opinion remain among us. Just what our anonymity means and just how far it ought to go are unsettled questions.

Though we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism as we once did, we still find individuals who are extremely sensitive about their connection with us. A few come in under assumed names. Others swear us to the deepest secrecy. They fear their connection with Alcoholics Anonymous may ruin their business or social position. At the other end of the scale of opinion we have the individual who declares that anonymity is a lot of childish nonsense. He feels it his bounden duty to cry his membership in Alcoholics Anonymous from the house tops. He points out that our A.A. fellowship contains people of renown, some of national importance. Why, he asks, **shouldn’t** we capitalize their personal prestige just as any other organization would?

In between these extremes the shades of opinion are legion. Some groups, especially newer ones, conduct themselves like secret societies. They do not **wish** their activities known even to friends. Nor do they propose to have preachers, doctors, or even their wives at any of their meetings. As for inviting in newspaper reporters-perish the thought! Other groups feel that their communities should know all about Alcoholics Anonymous. Though they print no names, they do seize every opportunity to advertise the activities of their group. They occasionally hold public or semi-public meetings where AA’s appear on the platform by name. Doctors, clergymen and public officials are frequently invited to speak at such gatherings. Here and there a few AA’s have dropped their anonymity completely. Their names, pictures and personal activities have appeared in the public prints. As AA’s they have sometimes signed their names to articles telling of their membership.

So, while it is quite evident that most of us believe in anonymity, our practice of the principle does vary a great deal. And, indeed, we must realize that the future safety and effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous may depend upon its preservation.

The vital question is: Just where shall we fix this point where personalities fade out and anonymity begins?

As a matter of fact, few of us are anonymous so far as our daily contacts go. We have dropped anonymity at this level because we think our friends and associates ought to know about Alcoholics Anonymous and what it has done for us. We also wish to lose the fear of admitting that we are alcoholics. Though we earnestly request reporters not to disclose our identities, we frequently speak before semi-public gatherings under our right names. We wish to impress audiences that our alcoholism is a sickness we no longer fear to discuss before anyone. So far, so good. If, however, we venture beyond this limit we shall surely lose the principle of anonymity forever. If every AA felt free to publish his own name, picture and story we would soon be launched upon a vast orgy of personal publicity which obviously could have no limit whatever. Isn’t this where, by the strongest kind of tradition, we must draw the line?

## PART TWO

Discussing **the** subject of anonymity in a previous *Grapevine* article, I tried to make the following points—that anonymity has, for us AA's, an immense spiritual significance; that the principle ought **to** be preserved as part of our vital tradition: that since we have as yet no sharply defined policy there is confusion in some quarters as to what anonymity ought to mean; that we need, therefore, a perfectly clear tradition which all AA's would feel bound to respect. I also offered some suggestions which I hoped might become, after further discussion, the basis of a general policy on anonymity. These suggestions were:

1. It should be the privilege of each AA to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow AA's should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.

2. Conversely, the individual AA ought to respect the feeling of his local group about anonymity. If his group wishes to be less conspicuous in their locality than he does, he ought to go along with them unless they change their views.

3. It ought to be a world-wide policy that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish, in connection with any A.A. activity, his name or picture in mediums of public circulation. This would not, however, restrict the use of his name in other public activities provided, of course, he does not disclose his A.A. membership.

If these suggestions, or variations of them, are to be adopted as a general policy, every AA will want to know more about our experience so far. He will surely wish to know how most of our older members are thinking on the subject of anonymity at the present time. It will be the purpose of this piece to bring everybody up to date on our collective experience.

Firstly, I believe most of us would agree that the general idea of anonymity is sound, because it encourages alcoholics and the families of alcoholics to approach us for help. Still fearful of being stigmatized, they regard our anonymity as an assurance their problems will be kept confidential; that the alcoholic skeleton in the family closet will not wander in the streets.

Secondly, the policy of anonymity is a protection to our cause. It prevents our founders or leaders, so called, from becoming household names who might at any time get drunk and give A.A. a black eye. No one need say that couldn't happen here. It could.

Thirdly, almost every newspaper reporter who covers us complains, at first, of the difficulty of writing his story without names. But he quickly forgets this difficulty when he realizes that here is a group of People who care nothing for personal gain. Probably it is the first time in his life he has ever reported an organization which wants **no** personal publicity. Cynic though he may be, this obvious sincerity instantly transforms him into a friend of A.A. Therefore his piece is a friendly piece, never a routine job. It is enthusiastic writing because the reporter feels that way himself. People often ask how Alcoholics Anonymous has been able to secure such an incredible amount of excellent publicity. The answer seems to be that

*practically everyone* who *writes* about us becomes an A.A. convert, sometimes a zealot. Is not our policy of anonymity mainly responsible for this phenomenon?

Fourthly, why does **the general public** regard us so favorably? Is it simply because we are bringing recovery to lots of alcoholics? No, this can hardly be the whole story. However impressed he **may** be by our recoveries, John Q. Public is even more interested in our way of life. Weary of pressure selling, spectacular promotion and shouting public characters, he is refreshed by our quietness, modesty and anonymity. It well may be that he feels a great spiritual power is being generated on this account—that something new has come into his own life.

If anonymity has already done these things for us, we surely ought to continue it as a general policy. So very valuable to us now, it may become an incalculable asset for the future. *In a spiritual sense, anonymity amounts to the renunciation of personal prestige as an instrument of general policy.* I am confident that we shall do well to preserve this powerful principle; that we should **resolve never to let go of it.**

Now **what** about its application? Since we advertise anonymity to every **newcomer, we ought,** of course, to preserve a **new** member's anonymity so long as **he** wishes it preserved. Because, when **he** read our publicity and came to us we contracted to do **exactly that.** And even if **he wants to come** in under an assumed name, we should assure **him he** can. If he wishes us to **refrain from discussing his case with anyone, even other A.A. members, we** ought to respect that wish too. While most newcomers **do not care a rap** who knows about their alcoholism, there are others **who care very much.** Let us guard them in every way until they get over that feeling.

Then comes the problem of the newcomer **who wishes to drop his** anonymity too fast. He rushes to all his friends with the glad news of A.A. If his group does not caution him he may rush to a newspaper office or a microphone to tell the wide world all about himself. He is also likely to tell everyone the innermost details of his personal life, soon to find that, in this respect, **he has** altogether too much publicity! We ought to suggest to him that **he take** things easy; that **he** first get on his own feet before talking about AA. to all and sundry; that no one thinks of publicizing A.A. without being sure of the approval of his own group.

Then there is the problem of Group anonymity. Like the individual, it is probable that the Group ought to feel its way along cautiously until it gains strength and experience. There should not be too much haste to bring in outsiders or to set up public meetings. Yet this early conservatism can be overdone. Some groups go on, year after year, shunning all publicity or any meetings except those for alcoholics only. Such groups are apt to grow slowly. They become stale because they are **not** taking in fresh blood fast enough. In their anxiety to maintain secrecy they forget their obligation to other alcoholics in their communities who have not heard that A.A. has come to town. But this unreasonable caution eventually breaks down. Little by little some meetings are opened to families and close friends. Clergymen and doctors may **now** and then **be** invited. Finally the Group enlists the aid of the local newspaper.

## MONEY – PART ONE

In most places, but not all, it is customary for AA's to use their own names when speaking before public or semi-public gatherings. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters are present they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program. This preserves the principle of anonymity so far as the general public is concerned and at the same time represents us as a group of alcoholics who no longer fear to let our friends know that we have been very sick people.

In practice then, the principle of anonymity seems to come down to this: With one very important exception. The question of how far each individual or group shall go in dropping anonymity is left strictly to the individual or group concerned. The exception is: That all groups or individuals, when writing or speaking for publication as members of Alcoholics Anonymous, feel bound never to disclose their true names. It is at this point of publication that we feel we should draw the line on anonymity. We ought not **disclose ourselves to the general public through the media of the press, in pictures or on the radio.**

Any who would drop their anonymity must reflect that they may set a precedent which could eventually destroy a valuable principle. We must never let any immediate advantage shake us in our determination to keep intact such a really vital tradition.

**Great modesty and humility are needed by every AA for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to A.A. as a whole. This principle of anonymity before the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attributes forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction and seldom, if ever, upon promotion.**

In Alcoholics Anonymous, does money make the mare go or is it the root of all evil? We are in the process of solving that riddle. Nobody pretends to have the complete answer. Where the proper use of money ends and its misuse begins--is the point in "spiritual space" we are all seeking. Few group problems are giving thoughtful AA's more concern than this. Every one is asking, "What shall be our attitude toward voluntary contributions, paid workers, professionalism, and outside donations?"

In the first years of A.A. we had no money problems. We met in homes where our women folk made sandwiches and coffee. If an individual AA wished to nudge a fellow alcoholic, he did so. It was purely his own affair. We had no group funds, hence no group money troubles. And it must be recorded that many an oldtime AA wishes we could now return to those early days of halcyon simplicity. Knowing that quarrels over material things have crushed the spirit of many a good undertaking, it is often thought that too much money may prove an evil for us too.

It's small use yearning for the impossible. Money has entered our picture and we **are definitely committed** to its proper use. No one would seriously think of abolishing our meeting places and clubs for the sake of avoiding money altogether. Experience has shown that we very much need these facilities, so we must accept whatever risk there is in them.

But how shall we keep these risks to a minimum; how shall we traditionally limit the use of money so that it may never topple the spiritual foundation upon which each A.A. life so completely depends? That is our real problem today. So let us look together at the main phases of our financial situation, seeking to discover what is essential, what is nonessential, what is legitimate and harmless, and what may be dangerous or unnecessary.

Suppose we begin with voluntary contributions. Each AA finds himself dropping money in "the hat" to pay the rent of a meeting place, a club, or the maintenance of his local or national headquarters. Though not all of us believe in clubs, and while a few AA's see no necessity for any local or national offices, it can be said fairly that the vast majority of us believe that these services are basically necessary. Provided such facilities are efficiently handled, and their funds properly accounted for, we are only too glad to pledge them our regular support, with the full understanding, of course, that such contributions are in no wise a condition of our A.A. membership. These particular uses of our money are now generally accepted and, with some qualifications, there is little worry of dire long range consequences.

Yet some concern does remain, arising mostly in connection with our clubs, local offices and the General Office. Because these places customarily employ paid workers, and because their operation implies a certain amount of business management, it is sometimes felt that we may get bogged down with a heavy officialdom or, still worse, a downright professionalization of A.A. Though it must be said that these doubts are not always unreasonable, we have already had enough experience to relieve them in large part.

To begin with it seems most certain that we need never be overwhelmed by our clubs, local offices or by the General Office at New York City. These are places of service; they cannot really control or govern A.A. If any of them were to become inefficient or overbearing the remedy is simple enough. The average AA would atop his financial support until conditions were **changed**. As our **A.A. membership does not depend on fees or dues** we can always "take our special facilities or leave them alone." These services must always serve **us** well or go out of business. Because no one is compelled to support them they can never dictate, nor can they stray from the main body of A.A. tradition for very long.

In direct line with the principle of "taking our facilities or leaving them alone" there is an encouraging tendency to incorporate all such special functions separately if they involve any great amount of money, property or management. More and more, the A.A. groups are realizing that they are spiritual entities, not business organizations. Of course the smaller club rooms or meeting places often remain unincorporated because their business aspect is only nominal. But as large growth takes place it **is** usually found wise to incorporate and so set the club apart from surrounding groups. **Support of the club then becomes an individual matter rather than a group matter.** If, however, the club also provides a central office secretary serving the surrounding area it seems only fair that group treasuries in that area should shoulder this particular expense because such a secretary serves all groups, even though the club itself may not. Our evolution in large A.A. centers is beginning to indicate most clearly that while it is a proper function of a cluster of groups, or their Central Committee, to support a paid secretary for their area, it is not a Group or Central Committee function to support clubs financially. Not all AA's care for clubs. Therefore club support has to come mainly from those individual AA's who need or like clubs. Which, by the way, is the majority. But the majority ought not to try to coerce the minority into supporting clubs they do not want or need.

Of course clubs also get a certain amount of help from meetings held in them. Where central meetings for an area take place in a club it is customary to divide the collection between the club and the central committee for the area, heavily favoring the club of course, because the club is providing the meeting place. The same arrangement may be entered into between the club and any particular group which wishes to use the club whether for meeting or entertainment. Generally speaking, the Board of Directors of a club looks after the financial management and the social life of the place. But strictly A.A. matters remain the function of the surrounding groups themselves. This division of activity is by no means the rule everywhere: it is offered as a suggestion only, much in keeping however, with the present trend.

A large club or central office usually means one or more paid workers. What about them-are they professionalizing A.A.? About this, there is a hot debate every time a club or central committee gets large enough to require paid help. On this subject we have all done a pile of fuzzy thinking. And I would be one of the first to plead guilty to that charge.

The reason for our fuzzy thinking is the usual one-it is fear. To each one of us, the ideal of A.A., however short we may be **of** it personally, is a thing of beauty and perfection. It is a Power greater than ourselves which

has lifted **us** out of the quicksand and set **us safe** on shore. The **slightest** thought of marring our ideal, much less bartering it for gold, is to most of us unthinkable. So we are constantly on the alert against the rise, within A.A., of a paid class of practitioners or missionaries. In A.A., where each of us is a goodwill practitioner and missionary in his own right, there is no need for anyone to be paid for simple 12th Step Work-a purely spiritual undertaking. While I suppose fear of any kind ought to be deplored, I must confess that I am rather glad that we exercise such great vigilance in this critical matter.

Yet there is a principle upon which I believe we can honestly solve our dilemma. It **is** this: A janitor **can** sweep the floor, a cook can boil the beef, a steward can eject a troublesome drunk, a secretary can manage an office, an editor can get out a newspaper-all, I am sure without professionalizing A.A. If we didn't do these jobs ourselves we would have to hire **non-alcoholics** to do them for us. We would not ask any non-alcoholic to do these things full time without pay. So why should some of **us**, who are earning good living ourselves in the outside world, expect other AA's to be full time caretakers, cooks or secretaries? Why should these AA's work for nothing at jobs which the rest of us could not or would not attempt ourselves? Or why, for that matter should they be any the less well paid than for similar labor elsewhere? And what difference should it make, if in the course of their duties, they do some 12th Step work besides? Clearly the principle seems to be that we may pay well for special services-but never for straight 12th Step work.

How then, could A.A. be professionalized? Quite simply. I might, for example, hire an office and hang on the door a sign reading: "Bill W.-Alcoholics Anonymous Therapist. Charges \$10.00 per hour." That would be face to face treatment of alcoholism for a fee. And I would surely be trading on the name of Alcoholics Anonymous, a purely amateur organization, to enlarge my professional practice. That **would** be professionalizing A.A.-and how! It would be quite legal, but hardly ethical.

Now does this mean we should criticize therapists as a class-even AA's who might choose to go into that field? Not at all. The point is, that no one ought to advertise himself as an **AA** therapist. As we are strictly amateur there can be no such thing. That would be a distortion of the facts which none of us could afford to try. As the tennis player has to drop his amateur status when he turns professional so should AA's who become therapists cease publishing their A.A. connection. While I doubt if many AA's ever go into the field of alcohol therapy, none ought to feel excluded, especially if they are trained social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists. But they certainly ought never to use their A.A. connection publicly or in such a way as to make people feel that A.A. has such a special class within its own ranks. That is where we all must draw the line.

## PART TWO

Discussing money in last month's Grapevine we made the following observations :

(a) That the use of money in A.A. is a matter of the gravest importance. Where its use ends and its misuse begins is the point we should vigilantly watch.

(b) That A.A. is already committed to a qualified use of money, because we would not think of abolishing our offices, meeting places and clubs simply for the sake of avoiding finances altogether.

(c) That our real problem today consists in setting intelligent and traditional limits upon our use of money, thus keeping its disruptive tendency at the minimum.

(d) That the voluntary contributions or pledges of AA. members should be our principal, and eventually, our sole support: that this kind of self support would always prevent our clubs and offices from getting out of hand because their funds could readily be cut off whenever they failed to serve us well.

(e) That we have found it generally wise to separately incorporate those special facilities which require much money or management; that an A.A. group is a spiritual entity, not a business concern.

(f) That we must, at all costs, avoid the professionalization of AA.; that simple 12th Step work is never to be paid for; that AA's going into alcohol therapy should never trade on their A.A. connection; that there is not, and can never be, any such thing as an "A.A. therapist."

(g) That AA. members may, however, be employed by us as full time workers provided they have legitimate duties over and beyond normal 12th Step work. We may, for example, surely engage secretaries, stewards and cooks without making them professional AA's.

Continuing now the discussion of professionalism: AA's frequently consult local committees or The Alcoholic Foundation saying they have been offered positions in related fields. Hospitals want A.A. nurses and doctors, clinics ask for AA's who are social workers, universities ask for AA's to work in the field of alcohol education on a non-controversial basis and industry wants us to recommend AA's as personnel officers. Can we, acting as individuals, accept such offers? Most of us see no reason why we cannot.

It comes down to this. Have we AA's the right to deny society the benefit of our special knowledge of the alcohol problem? Are we to tell society, even though we might make superior nurses, doctors, social workers or educators in the field of alcohol that we cannot undertake such missions for fear of professionalizing A.A.? That would certainly be farfetched, even ridiculous. Surely no A.A. should be barred from such employment because of his membership with us. He needs only to avoid "A.A. therapy" and any action or word which might hurt A.A. as a whole. Aside from this he ought to be just as employable as the non-alcoholic who would otherwise get the job and perhaps not do it half as well. In fact, I believe we still have a few AA.

bartenders. Though bartending, for obvious reasons, is not a specially recommended occupation, I have never heard anyone cry out that these few members are professionalizing A.A. on account of their very special knowledge of barrooms!

Years ago we used to think AA. should have its own hospitals, rest homes and farms. Nowadays we are equally convinced we should have nothing of the sort. Even our clubs, well inside A.A., are somewhat set apart. And in the judgment of practically all, places of hospitalization or rest should be well *outside* A.A.-and medically supervised. Hospitalization is most definitely the job of the doctor, backed, of course, by private or community aid. It is not a function of AA. in the sense of management or ownership. Everywhere we cooperate with hospitals. Many afford us special privileges and working arrangements. Some consult us. Others employ A.A. nurses or attendants. Relationships such as these almost always work well. But none of these institutions are known as "A.A. hospitals."

We have also had some experience with farms and drying out places which, though outside A.A. and medically supervised, have nevertheless been managed and financed by A.A. members. Some of these operations have done well, others very badly. And with one or two exceptions, the worst possible set-ups have been those in which A.A. groups, with group money and management, have gone into the "drying out" business. Despite exceptions, such "A.A. hospitals" seem the least promising of all. The group which takes one on usually finds that it has contracted an unnecessary responsibility and a heartbreaking amount of dissention. Being a group project it cannot be "taken or left alone." Either it has to be abandoned or it remains a raw sore on the body politic. These experiments have well demonstrated that the A.A. group will always have to be a spiritual entity, not a business concern. Better do one thing supremely well than two things badly !

Now what about donations or payments to A.A. from outside sources? There was a time some years ago, when we desperately needed a little outside aid. This we received. And we shall never cease being grateful to these devoted friends whose contributions made possible The Alcoholic Foundation, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and our General Office. Heaven has surely reserved a special place for every one of them. They met a great need, for in those days we AA's were very few and very insolvent!

But times have changed. Alcoholics Anonymous now has thousands of members whose combined earnings each year amount to untold millions of dollars. Hence a very powerful feeling is spreading among us that A.A. ought to be self-supporting. Since most members feel they owe their very lives to the movement they think we AA's ought to pay its very modest expenses. And isn't it high time, they ask, that we commence to revise the prevalent idea that an alcoholic is *always* a person who must be helped-usually with money. Let us AA's, they say, be no longer takers from society. Instead, let us be givers. We are not helpless now. Neither are we penniless any more. Were it possible to publish tomorrow that every A.A. group had become fully self-supporting, it is probable that nothing could create more good will for us than such a declaration. Let our generous public devote its funds to alcohol research, hospitalization or education. These fields really need money. But we do not. We are no longer poor. We can, and we should, pay our own way.

## ADEQUATE HOSPITALIZATION.. . ONE GREAT NEED

Of course, it can hardly be counted an exception to the principle of self support, if a non-alcoholic friend comes to a meeting and drop8 a dollar in the hat. It is doubtful, too, if we should refuse the relative who send8 in his \$5 mite, a token of appreciation for the recovery of ~~someone~~ close. Perhaps we would be ungracious to refuse hi8 gift.

But it is not these small tokens of regard which concern us. It is the large contributions, especially those that may carry future obligations, which should give us pause. Then too, there is evidence that wealthy people are setting aside sum8 for A.A. in their wills under the impression we could use a great deal of money if we had it. Shouldn't we discourage them? And already there have been a few alarming attempts at the public solicitation of money in the name of Alcoholic8 Anonymous. Few AA's will fail to imagine where such a course would lead us. Every now and then we are offered money from so called "wet" or "dry" sources. Obviously dangerous, this. For we must stay out of that ill-starred controversy. Now and then the parents of an alcoholic, out of sheer gratitude, wish to donate heavily. I8 this wise? Would it be good for the alcoholic himself? Perhaps a wealthy AA wishes to make a large gift. Would it be good for him, or for us, if he did so? Might we not feel in hi8 debt and might he not, especially if a newcomer, begin to think he had bought a ticket to happy destination, sobriety ?

In no case have we ever been able to question the true generosity of these givers. But is it wise to take their gifts? Though there may be rare exceptions, I share the opinion of the most older AA's that acceptance of large donation8 from any source whatever is very questionable and almost-always a hazardous policy. True, the struggling club may badly need a friendly gift or loan. Even 80, it might be better in the long run to pay as we go. We must never let any immediate advantage, however attractive,-blind us to the possibility that we may be creating a disastrous precedent for the future. Strife over money and property ha8 too often wrecked better societies than we temperamental alcoholics!

It is with the deepest gratitude and satisfaction that I can now tell you of a recent resolution passed by our over-all service committee, the Trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation, who are the custodian8 of our national AA. funds. As a matter of policy, they have just gone on record that they will decline all gift8 carrying the slightest obligation, express or implied. And further. that The Alcoholic Foundation will accept no earnings which may be tendereb from any commercial source. As most reader8 know, we have been approached of late by several motion picture concerns about the possibility of an A.A. film. Naturally money ha8 been discussed. But our Trusteea, very rightly I think, take the position that A.A. has nothing to sell; that we all wish to avoid even the suggestion of commerce, and that in any case A.A., generally speaking, is now self-supporting.

To my mind, this is a decision of enormous importance to our future--a very long step in the right direction. When such an attitude about money become8 universal through A.A., we shall have finally steered clear of that golden, alluring, but very treacherous reef called Materialism.

In the years that lie just ahead Alcoholics Anonymous faces a supreme test--the great ordeal of it8 own prosperity and success. I think it will prove the greatest trial of all. Can we but weather that, the wave8 of time and circumstance8 may beat upon us in vain. Our destiny will be secure!

Despite the general effectiveness of the AA. program, we often need the help of friendly agencies outside A.A.

Nowhere is this more atrikingly true than in the field of hospitalization. Moat of us feel thrt ready access to hospitals and other place8 of rest and recuperation border8 on rbsolute necessity. While many an alcoholic has somehow got over hi8 bender without medical aid, and while a few of us hold the view that the hard "cold turkey" method is the best. the vast majority of AA's believe the newcomer whose case is at all serious has a much better chance of making the grade if well hospitalized at the outset. Indeed we see many cases where recoveries without medical help would seem virtually impossible, mentally 80 beclouded have they become, even when temporarily sober.

The primary purpose of hospitalization is not to save our prospect the pain of getting sober; its real purpose is to place him in the state of greatest possible receptivity to our A.A. program. Medical treatment clear8 his brain, takes away his jilters, and if done at a hospital he is kept there under control so that everybody know8 just where and when he can be visited. Moreover, the atmosphere of most hospitals is extremely conducive to a good first presentation of A.A. The very fact that he has now landed in a ho8pil.a.l impresses the new man with the seriousness of hi8 situation. If he has gone there voluntarily (which should be the case if at all possible) he usually regards hospitalization as the actual beginning of his sobriety. It puts, as it were, a "period" to hi8 drinking. It is an admission that he need8 help; that his drinking is out of control: that he cannot do the job alone. Often enough, hospitalization is the event that beautifully clears his path to acceptance of that all important 1st Step:

"We *admitted* we were powerless over *alcohol--that our* lives had become unmanageable."

With each passing year we increasingly realize the immense importance of adequately presenting the program to every new prospect who is in the least inclined to listen. Many of us feel this to be our greatest obligation to him and our failure to do 80 our greatest dereliction. The difference between a good approach and a bad one can mean life or death to those who seek our help. We have seen excellent prospects who received nothing but our brief and casual notice continue their stumbling journey to the undertaker, while aeamingly impossible cases who had received careful and considerate attention recovered on the spot or later came back and found their sobriety.

This careful and considerate attention can nowhere be better given than in the confines of a hospital. More and more, A.A. groups are adopting the idea of "sponsorship." Each newcomer is assigned a reasonably stable AA. member whose ward he become8 during his brief period of introduction to our way of life. The "sponsor" helps make hospital arrangements, take8 hi8 man there, visits him frequently and sees that he is visited by other AA'8 whose experience might be specially helpful. Hence a prospect so handled has received a powerful shot of A.A. and a good preview of what our society

is like before he ever goes to a meeting. At the hospital he **has time** to think soberly through **his** situation, read our literature and exchange impressions with other alcoholics who are going through **the same** process. Contrast this with the frequent situation in which, for lack of hospitalization, the sponsor has to try to "taper off" his prospect at **home** or drag him, half dazed, to an A.A. meeting where the new man proceeds to eat a lot of confused impressions or unfounded prejudices. While many of us **have** made our first contact with AA. under these unfavorable circumstances, and have stuck nevertheless, there are probably many who do not stick on such a poor contact; people who might have remained with us had they been properly hospitalized and sponsored.

So, out of what is now a huge experience, our conclusions are these: That hospitalization is imperative in **many** cases and because the hospital provides such a firm basis for good sponsorship it is desirable even in the less serious situations if the prospects are drinking or "foggy" when contacted. They definitely have a better chance if hospitalized.

Until recently few hospitals have wanted us alcoholics. We almost never got really well; we were hard to manage and disturbed other patients; we were regarded as sinners more than as sick people and, as a class, we were financially irresponsible. The average hospital management has always said, and with good reason, "Why bother with drunks? We can scarcely handle the people who are 'legitimately' sick, people we can really do something for. Sobering up drunks is a sheer waste of time and money."

Happily this attitude is changing because it is now becoming clear to physicians and public alike that a true alcoholic is really sick, however lacking in character he may be. Hope has now taken the place of centuries of despair that anything much could be done for problem drinkers. **AA.** and other agencies are now proving that recovery is possible to hundreds of thousands and that adequate hospital care can and **must** play a vital part in this process.

Though the trend is now in the right direction it **has** not yet produced any large scale result. Except the fortunate few, most A.A. groups are up against it. Reasonably priced or free hospital accommodation for alcoholic is still woefully scarce. Each group has to do the best it can.

Let's take stock, therefore, of what is generally available today and what kind of relations we can best cultivate with existing agencies. Let us also consider **what** part we ought to play in securing improved hospitalization.

Many AA's have been state asylum inmates. While our treatment at these institutions has been far better than many suppose, it is a fact that the average asylum superintendent still prefers to handle insane persons. The average mental case stays put for a while. Then too, for mental cases an asylum could feel it was really doing something, either by way of custody or cure. But **the** average alcoholic, unless permanently insane, was a headache. Brought in temporarily balmy he would promptly recover his sanity, at least legally speaking, and would clamor to get out only to return in days or weeks. No wonder the average institution disliked alcoholics.

Now that so many of us are coming out of asylums to stay, the authorities are everywhere becoming more cooperative. In many institutions the alcoholics are able and willing to recover are placed in a ward of their own. They are no longer mingled with the insane. Visiting AA's are admitted and meetings are held within the walls. While no asylum can, of course, be

used as a simple sobering-up place only, it is true that asylum doctors are now often willing to take cases on less evidence of psychosis than formerly, provided **they** and the nearby A.A. group feel that a permanent recovery is possible. The doctors are **also more** willing to commit promising patients for much briefer periods and liberate earlier those who seem to be making good A.A. progress. So any A.A. group near an asylum which contains alcoholics capable of recovery can usually form these desirable relationships with the authorities but they should *never* try to **tell the doctors how** to hospitalize alcoholics. We must never blame any doctor **who has not** yet seen AA. at work for his skepticism. Let us remember he probably has good **reason** to be that way!

Our experience with public hospitals in large cities has been varied. Here we usually find much reluctance to keep our good prospects even a few days, unless, of course, they happen to be delirious, psychotic, or physically injured. **These** hospitals feel they have no right to use precious beds to **sober** up run-of-the-mill drunks. But as public hospitals become aware that we are bringing recovery to a substantial number of their regular habitués they become more hopeful and cooperative. Visiting privileges are extended to us and promising cases are kept several days. The development of these relations takes place slowly. The hospital has to be thoroughly convinced that we are bringing recovery to enough patients to justify any special consideration. Because public hospitals are mostly free or very moderate in their charges, we too often abuse our privileges. We are tempted to ask special treatment for "sipees" who have **no** present idea of stopping drinking; we often insist on visiting at all hours and in any numbers; we are likely to brag about A.A. as the only remedy for alcoholism and thus incur the displeasure of hard-working nurses and doctors who might otherwise be glad to help us. But **these** natural mistakes are usually corrected **and** we finally come up with a friendly, clear-cut relationship which is often handired in large A.A. centers through our Intergroup Central Offices or hospital committees.

We enjoy **fine** privileges with many private sanitariums and "drying out" places. Occasionally the reverse has been true. Here and there we have found some tendency to exploit alcoholics—too much sedative, too many "tapering off" drinks, too long and too expensive stays, an inclination to **misuse** the A.A. name for business purposes, etc. But these tendencies are disappearing. It is realized, even by those who might be tempted to take liberties with us, that cooperation with A.A. is more profitable in the long run than non-cooperation. But it must always be remembered that on the whole our treatment in these places is good—some of them are staffed by the warmest friends we **have**. I cannot forget that the first physician ever to take a serious and helpful interest in us is still a staff member of a private hospital for alcoholics; that the first psychiatrist to see the possibilities of A.A., and one who had the courage to go to bat for us before his profession, is the staff member of a sanitarium. When such excellent places offer us friendly cooperation we surely ought to return it in kind.

Many sanitariums and private hospitals are necessarily too high priced for the average alcoholic. Public hospitals being too few, asylums and religious institutions too seldom available, the average group has been hard put to find spots where prospective members can be hospitalized a few days at modest expense.

This urgency has tempted some AA. groups to set up drying out places of their own, hiring AA. managers, nurses, and securing the services of a visiting physician. Where this has been done under the direct auspices of an A.A. group it has almost always backfired. It has put the group into business, a kind of business about which few AA's know anything at all. Too **many** clashing personalities, too many cooks spoiling the broth, usually bring about the abandonment of such attempts. We have been **obliged** to see that an AA. group is primarily a spiritual entity; that, as a group the less business it has to transact, the better. While on this theme it **ought** to be noted that practically all group schemes **to finance or guarantee** hospital bills for fellow members have failed also. Not only do many such loans go unpaid, there is always the controversial question in the group as to which prospects deserve them in the first place.

In still other instances A.A. groups, driven by their acute need for medical aid, have started public money raising campaigns to set up "AA. hospitals" in their communities. These efforts almost invariably come to naught. Not only do these groups intend to go into the hospital business, **they intend** to finance their ventures by soliciting the public in the name of **Alcoholics Anonymous**. Instantly all sorts of doubts are generated; the projects bog down. Conservative AA's realize that business ventures or solicitations carrying the A.A. endorsement are truly dangerous to us all. Were **this** practice to become general the lid would be off. Promoters, **A.A.** and otherwise, would have a field day.

This search for reasonably priced and understanding medical treatment has brought into being still another class of facilities. These are rest farms and 'drying out' places operated by individual AA's under suitable medical supervision. These set-ups have proved far more satisfactory than group directed projects. As might be expected their success is in exact proportion to the managerial ability and good faith of the AA in charge. If he is able and conscientious, a very good result is possible; if not, the place folds up. Not being a group project and not bearing the A.A. name, these ventures can be taken or left alone. The operation of such establishments is always beset with peculiar difficulties. It is difficult for the AA manager to charge high enough rates to make the venture include a fair living for himself. If he does, people are apt to say that he is professionalizing, or "making money out of A.A." Nonsense though this may often be, it is a severe handicap nevertheless. Yet, in spite of the headaches encountered, a good number of these farms and sobering-up spots are in active operation and can seemingly continue just as long as they are tactfully managed, do not carry the A.A. name, and do not publicly solicit funds as A.A. enterprises. When a place has an AA in charge we sometimes do take thoughtless advantage of the fact. We dump alcoholics into it just to get them off our hands; we promise to pay bills and do not. Any AA who can successfully manage one of these "drunk emporiums" ought to be congratulated. It is a hard and often thankless job though it may bring him deep spiritual satisfaction. Perhaps this is the reason so many AA's wish to try it!

The question often arises about what to do with a severe case when no hospital is available. First of all, we ought, if possible, to call a doctor. We should ascertain for the doctor's benefit how long our man has been drinking and particularly whether he has been taking much sedative. Under no cir-

cumstances should we laymen ever administer any sedatives. We must leave this strictly to the doctor.

In some places AA's take turns sitting the clock around tapering off a man with a bad hangover. Though this can sometimes be done, the patient will usually insist on tapering himself "up" instead of "off." Now and then we have to adopt the desperate expedient of putting a man in jail, especially if violent. **But** when absolutely necessary, patience, persuasion, and a doctor's help will generally do the trick-if the patient will really try. If he won't there is little to do but let him drink on until he has had enough.

Among AA's one hears much discussion about the merits of the several treatments. Actually, our only concern about physical treatment is that of being satisfied that the physician in charge understands alcoholics.

Two other promising prospects for good and reasonably priced hospitalization are in view. These are the various general hospitals which continue to open their doors to us. Very early in A.A. history Catholic hospitals in a few mid-western cities saw our need and took us in, regardless of denomination. Their example has led other religiously oriented institutions to do likewise, for which we are extremely grateful. Quite recently, other private and semi-private general hospitals have begun to show great interest. **Sometimes** they go so far as setting apart wards for A.A. use, admitting alcoholics on our recommendation only, giving us generous visiting privileges and very reasonable rates. Arrangements of this sort already functioning have been so satisfactory to both hospitals and A.A. that many such set-ups should soon be active. In these situations we do not participate in hospital management. We are afforded special privileges in exchange for our cooperation.

It surely may be said that the future looks bright. Much more hospitalization, based on the certainty that we are a sick people and that plenty can be done about it, is now on the way. We ought gratefully to acknowledge the work of those agencies outside A.A. who are strenuously helping this life-redeeming trend along. State, county, and municipal governments, large universities are agitating our cause. They are being nobly seconded by various hospital and other associations. While traditionally A.A. does not ever exert any political or promotional pressure, we can, as individuals, make our great need for sufficient hospitalization known to all who might be interested; emphasizing, of course, that though we believe hospitalization to be primarily a medical problem for communities and physicians to answer, we AA's would like to cooperate with them in every possible way.



outlying **A.A.** members personally contributed to the 24th Street Club, many a cent did their respective groups ever send in.

Then we took another tack. If the outlying groups would not support the Club, they at least might want to <sup>DRY</sup> the salary of its secretary. She was really doing an "area" job. Surely this was a reasonable request. "But it never got anywhere. They just couldn't mentally separate the "area secretary" from the Manhattan Club. So, for a long time, our area needs, our common **A.A.** problem, and our club management were tied into a trying financial and psychological snarl.

This tangle slowly commenced to unravel, as we began to get the idea that clubs ought to be strictly the business of those individuals who specially want clubs, and who are willing to pay for them. We begin to see that club management is a pure business proposition which ought to be separately incorporated under another name such, for example, as "**Alanon**"; that the "directors" of a club Corporation ought to look after club business only; that an **A.A.** group, as such, should never get into active management of a business project. Hectic experience has since taught us that if an **A.A.** rotating committee tries to boss the club Corporation or if the Corporation tries to run the **A.A.** affairs of those groups who may meet at the club, there is difficulty at once. The only way we have found to cure this is to separate the material from the spiritual. If an **A.A.** Group wishes to use a given club, let them pay rent or split the meeting take with the club management. To a small group opening its first clubroom, this procedure may seem silly because, for the moment, the group members will also be club members. Nevertheless separation by early incorporation is recommended because it will save much confusion later on as other groups start forming in the area.

Questions are often asked: "Who elects the business directors of a club?" "Does club membership differ from **A.A.** membership?" "How are clubs supported and financed?" As practices vary, we don't quite know the answers yet. The most reasonable suggestions seem these: Any **A.A.** member ought to feel free to enjoy the ordinary privileges of any **A.A.** club whether he makes a regular voluntary contribution or not. If he contributes regularly, he should, in addition, be entitled to vote in the business meetings which elect the business directors of his club corporation. This would open all clubs to all **AA's**. But it would limit their business conduct to those interested enough to contribute regularly. In this connection, we might remind ourselves that in **A.A.** we have no fees or compulsory dues. But it ought to be added, of course, that since clubs are becoming separate and private ventures, they can be run on other lines if their members insist.

Acceptance of large sums from any source to buy, build, or finance clubs almost invariably leads to later headaches. Public solicitation is, of course, extremely dangerous. Complete self-support of clubs and everything else connected with **B.A.** is becoming our universal practice.

Club evolution is also telling us this: In none but small communities are clubs likely to remain the principal centers of **A.A.** activity. Originally starting as the main center of a city, many a club moves to larger and larger quarters, thinking to retain the central meeting for its area within its own walls. Finally, however, circumstances defeat this purpose.

Circumstance number one is that the growing **A.A.** will burst the walls of any clubhouse. Sooner or later the principal or central meeting has to be moved into a large auditorium. The club can't hold it. This is a fact which

ought to be soberly contemplated whenever we think of buying or building large clubhouses. A second circumstance seems sure to leave most clubs in an "off center" position, especially in large cities. That is our strong tendency toward central or intergroup committee management of the common **A.A.** problems of metropolitan areas. Every area, sooner or later, realizes that such concerns as intergroup meetings, hospital arrangements, local public relations, a central office for interviews and information, are things in which every **AA** is interested, whether he has any use for clubs or not. These being strictly **A.A.** matters, a central or intergroup committee has to be elected and financed to look after them. The groups of an area will usually support with group funds these truly central activities. Even though the club is still large enough for intergroup meetings and these meetings are still held, the center of gravity for the area will continue to shift to the intergroup committee and its central activities. The club is left definitely offside; where, in the opinion of many, it should be. Actively supported and managed by those who want clubs, they can be "taken or left alone."

Should these principles be fully applied to our clubs, we shall have placed ourselves in a position to enjoy their warmth yet drop any that get too hot. We shall then realize that a club is but a valuable social aid. And, more important still, we shall always preserve the simple **A.A.** group as that primary spiritual entity whence issues our greatest strength.

## DANGERS IN LINKING A.A. TO OTHER PROJECTS

Our A.A. experience has been raising the following set of **important, but** as yet unresolved questions. **First**, should A.A. as a whole enter the **outside** fields of hospitalization, research **and** non-controversial **alcohol** education? Second, **is** an A.A. member, acting strictly as an individual, justified **in** bringing **his** special experience and knowledge into such enterprises? And thirdly, if an A.A. member does **take** up these phases of the total **alcohol** problem, under what conditions should he work?

With respect to **these** questions, almost any opinion can be heard among our groups. Generally speaking, there are three school8 of thought, the "do everything" school; the "do something" school; and, the "do nothing" school.

We have **AA's** so fearful we may become entangled, or somewhat exploited, that they would keep us a strictly closed corporation. They would exert the strongest possible pressure to prevent **all** AA's, whether as individual8 or groups, from doing anything at **all** about the total alcohol problem, except, of course, their straight **A.A.** work. They see the **spectre** of the Washingtonian movement among alcoholics of a hundred yens ago which fell into disunity partly because it8 member8 Publicly took up cudgel8 for abolition, prohibition-and what not. These AA'8 believe that we **must** preserve our isolation at any cost; that we must keep absolutely to ourselves if we would avoid **like** perils.

Then we have the AA who would have **us** "do everything" for the total alcohol problem-any time, any place and any way! **In** his **enthusiasm**, he not only thinks his beloved A.A. a "cure-all" for drunks, but he **also** think8 we have the answer for everything and everybody touching alcohol. He strongly feels that A.A. ought to place it8 name and **financial** credit squarely behind **any** first rate research, hospital or educational project. Seeing that A.A. now makes the headlines, he argues that we should freely Joan out **our** huge good will. Says he, "Why shouldn't we AA's stand right up in Public and be counted? Millions could be raised easily for good work8 in alcohol." The judgment of this **enthusiast** is sometimes beclouded by the fact he wants to make a career. But with most who enthuse so **carelessly**, I'm sure it's more often a case of sheer **exuberance** plus, in many instances, a deep **sense** of **social** responsibility.

So we have with us the enthusiast8 and the ultra-cautious; the "do everything8" and the "do nothings." But the average A.A. is not so worried about these phenomena as he used to be. He knows that out of the heat and smoke there will soon come light. Presently there will issue an enlightened policy, palatable to everyone. Tested by time, that policy, if sound, will become A.A. Tradition.

Sometime8 I've feared that A.A. would never bring forth a workable policy. Nor was my fear abated as my own views swung with complete inconsistency from one extreme to the other. But I should have had more faith. We are commencing to have enough of the strong light of experience to see more surely; to be able to say with more certainty what we can, and what we surely cannot do, about causes such as education, research and the like.

For example, we can say quite emphatically that neither **A.A.** as a whole nor **any A.A. Group** ought to enter any other activity than **straight A.A.** AR groups, we **cannot endorse**, finance or form an alliance with **any** other cause, **however** good ; we **cannot** link the **A.A.** name to other enterprises in the **alcohol** field to the extent that **the public** gets the impression **we have abandoned** our sole aim. We must discourage our member8 and our **friends** in **these** fields from **stressing** the **A.A.** name in their Publicity or **appeals** for **funds**. To act **otherwise** will certainly imperil **our unity**, and to maintain our unity is surely **our** greatest **obligation**—to our brother **alcoholics** and the public at **large**. Experience, we think, has already made these principles self-evident.

**Though** we now come to more debatable ground, we must earnestly ask ourselves whether nny of us, as individuals, ought to carry our special experience into other phases of **the alcohol** problem. Do we not owe **this much** to society, and can it **be** done without involving A.A. as **a** whole?

To my mind, the "do nothing" policy has become unthinkable, partly because I'm sure that our members can work in other non-controversial alcohol activities without jeopardizing A.A., if they observe a few simple **precautions**, and partly **because** I have developed a deep conviction that to do **less** would be to **deprive** the whole of society of the immensely valuable **contributions** we could almost certainly make. **Though** we are AA's, and A.A. **must** come first, we are **also** citizens of the world. Besides, we are, like our good friends the **physicians**, honor-bound to share all we know with all men.

Therefore it seems to me that some of **us** must heed the call from other fields. And those who do need only remember first and last they are AA's; that in their new activities they are individual8 only. This means that they will respect the principle of anonymity in the press; that if they do appear before the general public they will not describe themselves as **AA's**; that they will refrain from emphasizing their A.A. status in appeals for money or publicity.

These simple Principles of conduct, if conscientiously applied, could soon dispel all fears, reasonable and unreasonable, which many AA's now entertain. On such a basis A.A. as a whole could remain uncommitted yet friendly to any non-controversial **cause** seeking to write a brighter page in the dark annals of alcoholism.

A concluding word. Several year8 ago, I believed that we might, in **a** limited and cautious way, lend our name to selected outside ventures. One of these wa8 a very promising educational project. **I** was asked by faculty member8 of Yale University sponsoring the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism whether they might hire an AA. And could that AA, for **this** special **purpose**, break anonymity? MY answer was that of course an AA could be engaged; that such an engagement would **not, by any** imagination, be a professionalization of A.A. as the work to be done **would** be in another field entirely; **that** if an AA could make a better educator, then why **not?** **Though** there has never been much question that **this was** sound enough policy, the same could not be said for **my reply** on the matter of dropping anonymity, to which, in this instance, **I** gave **approval**.

That **course** ha8 since proved mistaken. A good A.A. friend of mine took this particular post and then dropped anonymity. The first effect was **good**. It brought **A.A.** a considerable amount of publicity and many members. **On**

the educational side the public was made conscious as never before that alcoholism is a sickness and that something could be done about it. So far, very good.

But of late, some confusion has arisen. Because of the large amount of publicity linking the A.A. name and that of the educational project the public tends to think A.A. as a whole has gone in for alcohol education. And when the A.A. name became associated in the public mind with a fund raising campaign, there was still more confusion. Some givers were under the impression they were contributing to A.A., only to be told by friends that A.A. did not solicit money. Hence a long-term liability of dropping anonymity is beginning to offset its short-term advantages. As experience makes this more clear, not only to me, but to my friends of the university and of the educational committee, they agree perfectly and are now endeavoring to correct the situation.

Naturally, and most earnestly, I hope that none of those involved or the work of the committee will suffer to any degree from our mistake. Such, after all, is the process of trial and error by which we all learn and grow.

Briefly summarizing, I'm rather sure our policy with respect to "outside" projects will turn out to be this: A.A. does not sponsor projects in other fields. But, if these projects are constructive and non-controversial in character, A.A. members are free to engage in them without criticism if they act as individuals only, and are careful of the A.A. name. Perhaps that's it. Shall we try it?

## WILL A. A. EVER HAVE A PERSONAL GOVERNMENT?

The answer to this question is almost surely "no." That is the clear verdict of our experience.

To begin with, each AA has been an individual who, because of his alcoholism, could seldom govern himself. Nor could any other human being govern the alcoholic's obsession to drink, his drive to have things his own way. Time out of mind, families, friends, employers, doctors, clergymen, and judges have tried their hand at disciplining alcoholics. Almost without exception the failure to accomplish anything by coercion has been complete. Yet we alcoholics can be led, we can be inspired, coming into A.A. we can, and we gladly do, yield to the will of God. Hence it is not strange that the only real authority to be found in A.A. is that of Spiritual Principle. It is never personal authority.

Our unreasonable individualism (egocentricity if you like) was, of course, the main reason we all failed in life and betook ourselves to alcohol. When we couldn't coerce others into conformity with our own plans and desires, we drank. When others tried to coerce us, we also drank. Though now sober, we still have a strong hangover of these early traits which caused us to resist authority. Therein probably hangs a clue to our lack of personal government in A.A.: no fees, no dues, no rules and regulations, no demand that alcoholics conform to A.A. principles, no one set in personal authority over anyone else. Though no sterling virtue, our aversion to obedience does pretty well guarantee us freedom from personal domination of any kind.

Still, it is a fact that most of us do follow, in our personal lives, the "12 Suggested Steps to Recovery." But we do this from choice. We prefer recovery to death. Then, little by little, we perceive that the spiritual basis of life is the best. We conform because we want to.

Likewise, most A.A. groups become willing to follow the "Twelve Points of Tradition to Assure Our Future." The groups are willing to avoid controversy over outside issues such as politics, reform or religion; they stick to their single purpose of helping alcoholics to recover; they increasingly rely on self support rather than outside charity. More and more do they insist on modesty and anonymity in their public relations. The A.A. groups follow these other traditional principles for the very same reason that the individual AA follows the "12 Steps to Recovery." Groups see they would disintegrate if they didn't and they soon discover that adherence to our tradition and experience is the foundation for a happier and more effective group life.

Nowhere in A.A. is there to be seen any constituted human authority that can compel an A.A. group to do anything. Some A.A. groups, for example, elect their leaders. But even with such a mandate each leader soon discovers that while he can always guide by example or persuasion he can never boss, else at election time he may find himself passed by.

The majority of A.A. groups do not even choose leaders. They prefer rotating committees to handle their simple affairs. These committees are invariably regarded as servants—they have only the authorization to serve, never to command. Each committee carries out what it believes to be the

In response to the many Group inquiries, we wish, however, to be as definite as possible. So here follows a set of typical questions such as Groups ask. To them we append definite answers. Of course these answers aren't to be construed as final or perfect. Nor are they to be thought of as rules, regulations, or "musts." But they may help in perplexing situations.

1. Q. Should an A.A. Group, as such, ever incorporate?

A. No. Some have, but usually wish they hadn't.

2. Q. Should an A.A. Group, as such, go into the business of running a Club, a hospital, a research, educational, or "rehabilitation" venture?

A. We think definitely not. Experience has been telling us to avoid this. The A.A. Group ought to remain a spiritual entity.

3. Q. But how about Clubs? Being so close to A.A., shouldn't they be an exception; just why shouldn't they bear the A.A. name and be managed by the Group itself?

A. We used to think they should. When a Group is small and merely hires a room, it is quite natural to call the place an "A.A. Clubroom." Conversationally, most Clubs are still called "A.A. Clubs." But when an area contains many AA's, and perhaps several Groups, not all the A.A. members will care for Clubs. Hence the business management of the Club (or Clubs) in the area must become the function of those who individually contribute to their support, and the corporate title should omit the initials "A.A.," and our name, "Alcoholics Anonymous." The contributors ought to elect the business management. Then other AA's can "take the Club or leave it alone." Club Corporations often adopt a related title, such as "Alano" or "Alkanon." But more remote ventures, such as farms or drying-out places operated by individual AA's, ought not use these "related" titles.

4. Q. Our Group did form a separate Corporation for our Club. We made every one of our A.A. Group members a voting member of that Corporation. Now the directors of the Club Corporation are at odds with our Group rotating committee. The Club directors try to run both the Club and the Group. The Group committee also tries to run the Club. What do we do about that?

A. This is a natural difficulty. It can be corrected by a realization on the part of the Club directors that theirs is the duty of providing a suitable Club only—a purely business operation. They merely hold or rent the property, keep the place policed and swept out. They raise money from individual monthly pledges; they also receive rentals from the treasuries of such A.A. Groups as may hold meetings in the Club. This is usually a generous proportion of those funds which result from "passing the hat." Each A.A. Group ought to have its own small treasury. Out of these funds the Group pays for whatever use it may make of the local Club. This avoids confusion as between Group monies and Club Corporation funds. Under these conditions the Club has no special hold on the Group or vice versa. Pure A.A. matters are handled by the Group committee. But jurisdiction over social

activities in a Club will vary; sometimes the Club directors handle them, sometimes the Group committee, sometimes a special committee.

There is often confusion between Club membership and A.A. membership. In a limited sense, they are one and the same thing, as practically all Clubs open their doors to every reasonably well-behaved AA who wishes to frequent them.

But when Club management is involved, we are beginning to believe a distinction should be made between Club privileges, Club voting membership, and A.A. membership. Any A.A. interested in a Club ought to be willing to contribute regularly to its support. Though he may not be able to contribute much, it will be something. Obviously, as a monthly contributor, he should be eligible to serve as a Club officer or director and should vote at business meetings. While straight A.A. is free as air and most Clubs are wide open to all, there seems no good reason why a persistent non-contributor should claim any right to vote at a club's business meeting. If he wants to help manage the Club's money, he ought to contribute a little himself. So, when we come to distinguish clearly between Club privileges, Club voting membership, and A.A. membership itself, we shall have surmounted many current troubles.

5. Q. Our Group is small. Every local A.A. member is a Club enthusiast. Do you think we should incorporate just the same, even though A.A. membership and Club membership is identical, and in our town everybody contributes to the Club?

A. If your Club has to sign a lease, buy property, or have a sizeable bank account, by all means incorporate. Establish this way of doing and thinking and you will avoid later complications. We suggest you be careful about mixing A.A. affairs with your business meetings—business only there!

A Clubroom may, of course, be so small and inexpensive, or its future so uncertain that it would be premature to incorporate. That's a matter for sound judgment.

6. Q. Should a Club Corporation charter include other activities, such as rehabilitation, hospitalizations, education, research, etc.?

A. We think definitely not. We suggest you limit Corporation charters to one activity and one location only. To incorporate the whole world of alcohol and mix that up with A.A. almost invariably leads to confusion. A simple, sharply limited objective is best. Mixtures of several functions we have sometimes tried, but usually with poor results.

7. Q. May individual AA's organize Foundations and raise money for research, education, rehabilitation, etc.?

A. There can be no objection if they act as individuals only and do not use the A.A. name in any way. But experience shows that there is always a strong temptation to use the B.A. name. If that is done, the program will ultimately suffer because the surrounding A.A. Groups will protest strongly—and rightly so, we think. The Alcoholic Foundation itself, though it unofficially represents A.A. as our General Service Board, has solicited no outside funds in recent years and it will soon abandon the title, "Foundation."

8. Q. **We want to build a Clubhouse. Should we do so? And how shall we finance it?**

A. Chances are that any Club built will prove too small. Better lease if you can. A thickly populated A.A. area will eventually do better with several small leased Clubs than a single costly one. If a Club is big, expensive, and owned outright, it can later prove very difficult to "take or leave alone."

It's always better for members to raise the money among themselves if they must build, supplemented if absolutely necessary by a friendly outside loan calling for easy but definite repayment. Our reputation for complete self-support is a valuable asset. Beware of loans or contributions with implied obligations, **political** entanglements, or controversial issues attached. And, obviously, public solicitation using the A.A. name is *dangerous*.

9. Q. **What about drying-out places—how ought they be handled?**

A. We feel that A.A. Groups shouldn't go into these ventures. But individual AA's sometimes handle these situations very well if they avoid public solicitations and advertisements using the A.A. name. Places of recuperation ought to be private undertakings purely-and privately financed.

10. Q. **What should be the attitude of an A.A. Group toward "outside" ventures like education, research and the like?**

A. No attitude at all. Participation in them is an individual matter. But individuals should not be discouraged from participation if they are careful of the A.A. name. Please reread the article in this booklet on outside ventures.

11. Q. **We realize that our present Club (or hospital) set-up is contrary, in some ways, to the general experience. But it hasn't per given us much trouble. Shall we now change it to conform to the A.A. Tradition?**

A. That's entirely up to you. The material in this booklet is suggestive only. If your present set-up works very well, it may not be worth the trouble to change now. But if there is much serious objection locally, it may be well to try those principles best proved by our large general experience.

12. Q. **Just what forms of corporation structure is usually best?**

A. **Most** states and countries have special corporate forms variously called membership, charitable, eleemosynary, etc. Trust your lawyer to select the best. You might emphasize to him these points: If humanly possible, eliminate the name, "Alcoholics Anonymous" from the Corporate title. (This name ought to be the sole **property** of A.A. as a whole.) Limit the "purpose clause" to one simple **objective** only. Limit the activities of the Corporation to one locality or address only. Don't try to incorporate a city, state or county; otherwise AA's in nearby places may well object.

This Article has been written to help alleviate the many complications that have arisen throughout A.A. touching Clubs, hospitals, and "outside ventures." There is nothing infallible about the principles set forth above. But they are, nevertheless, the distillation of much actual experience. It's very greatly hoped they **will** prove of especial assistance to our hundreds of new Groups. They may be able to avoid many of the natural but painful mistakes we A.A. oldsters have so often made.

**OUR A. A. GENERAL SERVICE CENTER:  
THE ALCOHOLIC FOUNDATION,  
THE A.A. GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE,  
AND  
THE A. A. GRAPEVINE**

We think that Alcoholics Anonymous will always need a world **center**—some single point of reference where, our few but important universal services can focus and then radiate to all who wish to be informed or helped. Such a place will 'ever be needed to look after our over-all public relations, answer widespread inquiries, publish an A.A. Group directory, distribute our standard literature in all **languages**, and foster new A.A. Groups by mail. We shall always want a place of advice and mediation touching important questions of general policy or A.A. Tradition and a safe repository for the modest funds needed to carry out these simple but vital purposes. We believe that The **A.A. Grapevine**, the principal monthly journal of Alcoholics **Anonymous**, should be closely linked to our custodial body, The Alcoholic Foundation.

Though still evolving to meet the fast-mounting demand, our A.A. General Service Center at New York does perform all these functions at the present time.

**THE ALCOHOLIC FOUNDATION**

The Trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation are, in effect, a General Service Board for the A.A. movement. Their duties are essentially custodial. They are custodians of our A.A. Tradition and receivers of voluntary A.A. Group contributions by which we maintain the A.A. General Service Office and its secretarial staff in New York. They are authorized by the Groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the financial and traditional integrity of the Grapevine, our principal A.A. newspaper. The Alcoholic Foundation also owns (through Works Publishing, Inc.) the book, **Alcoholics Anonymous**. Hence the Foundation Trustees are responsible for the printing and distribution of that volume and our standard pamphlet literature.

The Alcoholic Foundation has a Board of nine Trustees who meet quarterly. There are five non-alcoholics, friends of A.A., and four **A.A.** members. The present Alcoholic Foundation, organized in 1938, is the outgrowth of a small committee of interested friends who gave Dr. Bob and me invaluable assistance in the early years. Several of these friends, **as** Trustees, have served the A.A. movement ever since. The Trustees name their own successors, general elections among hundreds of A.A. Groups being impractical. The alcoholic members traditionally serve a three-year term and all Trustees **serve**, of course, without compensation. Realizing their recently increased responsibilities, the Trustees wish to share them with a large body of representative AA's meeting annually, who might be called the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Plans for such a Conference are being made.

Our financial arrangements here at A.A. Headquarters are extremely simple and modest. Twice yearly the A.A. Groups are asked to make voluntary contributions to the Foundation for the support of the A.A. General Service Office. On receipt of these Group monies, the Trustees deposit them in a special account earmarked "For A.A. General Office Expenses Only." Every six months the General Service Office issues to all A.A. Groups a report of its receipts and expenditures. The second principal source of Foundation income is from the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. These general funds, though they can be used for any A.A. purpose, act mainly as a reserve, protecting the General Office in case a severe depression or inflation should cause Group contributions to fall short. *The A.A. Grapevine*, not yet quite self-supporting, also receives help from this reserve. Our reserve now stands at about one and one-half year's General Office operating expense. The Foundation, believing that AA's wish to support their own General Office, no longer solicits "outside" funds. Some years ago the Trustees granted Dr. Bob and me, as co-founders of A.A., a royalty of 10% each on the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. That is our only present income from A.A. sources. All accounts are CPA audited.

To give thousands of newer AA's a more intimate view of the intense and invaluable activities of their General Office and *The A.A. Grapevine*, I would like to conclude this account of our General Headquarters with excerpts from a recent report:

### THE A.A. GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

Being the most active spot in A.A., the New York General Office last year (1946) answered 15,000 pleas for help from alcoholics and their families; it shipped half a million pamphlets and 25,000 A.A. books; it had about 12,000 telephone calls; it prepared and shipped 3,000 Group Lists; it got out a new printing of the A.A. book; arranged for a Spanish translation of the A.A. pamphlet; saw 2,000 visitors; registered and wrote to 500 new Groups, arranged much publicity, notably the *March of Time* film and the *Reader's Digest* piece; discussed the preparation of a full-length movie; wrote innumerable letters to Groups about their problems, and still found time to help the development of A.A. Groups in foreign countries.

All of this was done by a staff of twelve people—three alcoholics and nine "nons." It cost the A.A. Groups about \$36,000, still averaging a dollar a member for 1946, a year of steeply rising expenses. Some A.A. Groups contribute much more than a dollar per capita, some much less. No A.A. dollars can be better spent than those sent the Foundation for General Office expenses. Dr. Bob and I want to thank the Groups for their loyal support. May it never lessen!

At the General Office the vast outcome of its nine years exciting experience reposes in our files and in the heads of our two A.A. Secretaries. Because of their station at the heart of A.A., they are bound to have a broader view than most. Out of strenuous experience they have developed effective ways of handling the multitude of problems and situations which insistently press for answers. They have an immense personal acquaintance stretching all over the globe. With them a "crisis a day" is routine. We are coming to see that a permanently successful operation of the General Office

will depend on the preservation of all these accumulated experiences and contacts. Lest these immense assets be some day lost, we shall always need several assistant secretaries in training. And may we always remember that these secretarial servants of A.A. have a most strenuous vocation. They are entitled to our fullest appreciation and backing—their is no sinecure.

There must be few societies or organizations in the whole world whose General Service expenses are as modest as ours: One dollar a member a year of voluntary contributions. We therefore think that our necessary headquarters services should be the very best—that our few full-time workers should be paid, not by charity standards, but by business standards; that since most of us, thanks to A.A., earn excellent livings at business, we should not ask our special workers to do with less.

The growth of A.A. is so prodigious and continual that we all need bear in mind that our expense each year cannot but mount. While the total for last year was \$36,000, we expended \$12,994.72 on the General Office in the quarter ending June 30, 1947. This indicates that we are going to need about \$60,000 for the current twelvemonth. This will be about in line with our anticipated gain in membership. Hence we may expect that our general expenses will rise at least 50% a year for a long time to come.

One more point. The phrase, "\$1 a member a year" is sometimes confusing. People wonder why we ask for this sum *twice* a year. The answer is that all contributions are voluntary. Hence many Groups who are new, who badly need funds for local purposes, or who do not clearly understand our over-all need, do not contribute at all.

### THE A.A. GRAPEVINE

Our newest development, *The A.A. Grapevine*, is one of the finest of A.A. volunteer undertakings. Its 6,000 subscribers (1946) are to be found in every state of the Union and many foreign lands. Its editor and staff burn oil many nights in a little Greenwich Village room. Here, during the day, two full-time workers look after the *Grapevine* routine and correspond with the network of *Grapevine* reporters at home and abroad.

Like the earlier people who originated the Foundation, the A.A. book, and the General Office, *The A.A. Grapevine* began in 1945 among several newspaper-minded members who thought we needed a monthly periodical. They were willing to contribute a little money and boundless effort to make it a success. At the beginning, this group of AA's had no special authorization from anyone. They just took off their coats and did a job, a job so well done that at the end of a year they found their paper in national distribution. There was no sponsoring nor much promoting. Like the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the General Office, and the Foundation, the *Grapevine* became a part of A.A. life on its own effort and merit.

Arrived at this point, members of the *Grapevine* staff came to the Foundation Trustees to discuss the future of their publication. They also asked me to write some pieces and requested me to ascertain if the Groups would like to have their periodical as the principal A.A. monthly journal. Hundreds of Groups and individual subscribers came back with an enthusiastic "yes." There was scarce a dissent. So *The A.A. Grapevine* was incorporated, its beneficial ownership being transferred to the Foundation.

As one of the Grapevlners recently put it, "We think that The **A.A.** Grapevine ought to become the 'Voice of Alcoholics Anonymous,' bringing **us** news of each other across great distances and always describing what can be freshly seen in that vast and **lifegiving** pool we call 'A.A. **experience.**'" Never taking part in the controversial issues of religion, reform, or **politics**, never seeking **profit**, never lending itself to commerce or propaganda, **always** mindful of our sole aim-to carry the **A.A.** message to those who suffer from alcoholism-such is our ideal for the *Grapevine*.

With these sentimenta Dr. Bob and I heartily concur. We hope that **AA's** everywhere will feel it to be their newspaper; that our able writers will contribute freely; that **all** Groups will send in news of their doings which may be of general interest; **that the Grapevine** will presently take its place in the minds of all AA's as one of our essential general services close **alongside** the Foundation, the A.A. book, and the General Office.

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The Alcoholic Foundation is no longer seen as a moneyed institution or a charity. It has become, instead, The General Service Board for Alcoholics Anonymous, reflecting the collective conscience of our A.A. society. The Foundation's responsibility now extends well beyond that of handling our dollars and routine services. As the principal custodian of our tradition and policy, it acts, usually through The **A.A. Grapevine** or General **Office** staffs, to inform the whole world of our A.A. message and point of view. **The Grapevine**, the "Voice of Experience," reaches out to A.A. members. The General Office, in cooperation with the Foundation **Policy** Committee, conducts our public relations and is consulted in difficult intergroup situations. When serious questions arise, the Trustees deal with them directly, but no action is ever taken in the spirit of discipline or authority. Nor can the Foundation endorse or finance "outside enterprises". For our Headquarters is a service center only-NEVER a government or a charity.

In the **field** of A.A. Tradition and overall policy, Dr. Bob and I still do function. We are frequently consulted on questions which arise. But Bob and I feel that, while always glad to help, we should be less and less heard in **A.A.** councils. Only in this way can our General Service custodians, editors and secretaries be accustomed to function, as they must one day, when we so-called "founders" are no more.

This concludes what I hope has proved a welcome account of our stewardship.

BILL

## WHY CAN'T WE JOIN A.A. TOO!

DEAR AA's:

Dr. Bob and I have a **problem**. We'd like to share it **frankly** with you.

In actuality, A.A. has a score of "founders," men and women without whose special contributions A.A. might never have been. But somehow the title, "founder," seems to have attached itself almost solely to Dr. Bob and me-a phenomenon due perhaps to the general lack of information about our early days. This sentiment, though it prompts AA's to set us somewhat apart from the whole, is deeply affecting to us both. We surely **have** more reasons for gratitude than anyone in the world. But we are beginning to ask ourselves if this over-emphasis will be good for A.A. in the long run. Is so much sentiment for "**the** founders" entirely wise?

Perhaps we AA's can become a new kind of human society. To a degree hitherto unknown, A.A. may **he** able to function upon the power of its own fundamental principles rather than upon the prestige or inspiration of a highly personalized leadership. Thus the whole can become of transcending importance over any part; continued unity and success can then mostly depend upon God's working vitally in thousands of hearts rather than a few.

Deep down, I think we **AA's** have begun to sense this magnificent possibility. The widening conviction that active leadership ought to be transitory and rotating; that each A.A. Group with respect to its own affairs **needs** he accountable only to its own conscience; that **our** committees and boards are really servants, not officials; that we, as a movement, ought to remain poor, so avoiding the risks of disrupting wealth; that as individual **members** of A.A. we should **remain** anonymous before the general **public**—**these** are the signs and portents of a unique future. Such concepts certainly leave little room for a prestige-clothed leadership.

"**But,**" some will say, "how shall we make such a vision actually work when most societies have to rely so greatly on management, money, and heavily-publicized leadership exercising powerful personal suasion? Yet incredibly, we are beginning to see our vision come alive. Even though we **persist** in looking with misgiving on any large accumulation of money or personal **prestige** in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous, we do continue to grow **despite** the absence of these things, necessary though they often are, to other human endeavors.

Why is this possible? Is it because we are a superior people? Well, hardly! **Far** from being **better** than average, we are surely much more fallible. **Strangely** enough, our group strength seems to stem from our individual **and** ever potential weakness. We are alcoholics. Even though now recovered, we are never too far removed from the possibility of fresh **personal** disaster. **Each** knows he must observe a high degree of honesty, humility, and tolerance, or else drink again. For **us** of **A.A.** to drink is to die; to love God and fellow **mnn** is to live.

Under such potent conditions the impossible has become possible. When each AA's life literally depends upon his unselfish service to others, when false pride, self pity, or unhealthy self-seeking is almost certain to be unmercifully chastised by John **Barleycorn**, he needs but a minimum of **man-made** rules or inspired leaders to hold him on the right course. Nor for long is he apt to continue **anything** harmful to A.A. unity. He knows so well that we AA's shall have to hang together--or else hang separately! **At**

first the spiritual life because he must, be presently living because he wants to. Such is the truly Providential circumstance in which we all find ourselves; that is why we are beginning to see new values in A.A. We perceive in our midst a *spiritual realm* which can be little disturbed by the distractions of wealth or self-serving egocentricity.

Against this background let's have another look at Dr. Bob and me. Seemingly, the larger A.A. grows, the more our particular part in its creation and continuance tends to be emphasized. Our status remains exceptional. Nearly all other early Ah's have long since slipped over to the "sidelines" where, if they have retained the confidence of all, they are frequently consulted. By common consent they have become unofficial coaches, reservoirs of longer experience, to be sought out in the pinches. Their Alma Mater is now served by new teams. Those too will have their day on the field, then finally retire. This is, we think, as it ought to be.

Dr. Bob and I feel this sound doctrine should apply to us as well. There seems no good reason to make an exception of "the founders." The more we early members continuously occupy the center of the A.A. stage the more we shall set risky precedents for a highly personalized and permanent leadership. To well insure AA's future, is this not the very thing we should carefully avoid? Of course Dr. Bob and I do not want to ignore any special responsibility remaining still upon us. Quite the contrary; our principal mission today is probably that of helping A.A. form a sound Tradition. But how, for-example, can we advocate-the traditional principle of rotating leadership if we allow the belief to grow that we ought to be permanent exceptions ourselves? Of course we cannot.

Take for instance, my own situation. It is known that my health is recently improved; that I'm going to a large regional conference. Instantly come warm but most urgent invitations to speak at gatherings all over North America-even via phone and loud-speaker from New York. Most Ah's being good salesmen, the pressure on me is truly enormous.

While it's a wonderful feeling to be so much wanted, these bids do leave me in the middle of an acute dilemma-a real heartbreaker. How, in fairness, can I speak at ten anniversary dinners and refuse ninety; how can I make special recordings or telephone talks for all these occasions? Or, again, how can I respond to all the mail I receive; how can I advise hundreds of individuals and groups about their special problems? It is a physical impossibility. Even though I could somehow accomplish all these things, and so remain in the center of A.A. affairs indefinitely, would that be best for A.A. in the long run? Surely you will agree; it would not.

So the problem of Dr. Bob and me comes down to this: We must take our thousands of A.A. friends into our confidence and explain. Because we have to decline their many invitations, we must ask their full understanding. We shall somehow have to decide just what few things we are still specially fitted to do for A.A. and, within-the limits of our health, set about them.

For my part, I feel I ought to do much more writing: more A.A. Grapevine pieces, more pamphlets and possibly a new book dealing with the vital matter of A.A. unity. This material ought to be widely informative of our developing Tradition and of the little understood A.A. General Service Center. Occasionally I would like to appear at the larger regional gatherings for the purpose of discussing these matters with as many AA's as possible.

Over the next two or three years it will be desirable to broaden the base of our General Service Center here at New York so that it can include a yearly meeting of out-of-town AA's with the trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation, the B.A. General Office staff, and The A.A. Grapevine editors, this is to be called The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. To help construct such a Conference will be a real task which may eventually require us to visit a number of our large A.A. centers the country over.

For the good of A.A. as a whole these seem the things most needful to be done. If these projects are ever to be finished, I'm sure we can do little else. To succeed we shall need real freedom of decision and few diversions. Hence we beg your whole-hearted cooperation.

Though these assignments are still before us, Dr. Bob and I are now going to confess a deep yearning. As private citizens of A.A., we shall often wish to come and go among you like other people, without any special attention. And while we would like always to keep the wonderful satisfaction of having been among the originators, we hope you will begin to think of us as early AA's only, and not as "founders."

So, why can't we join A.A., too!

As Ever,

BILL