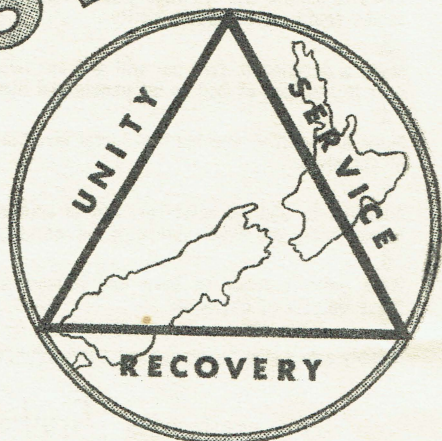


A.A.

is our

MAINSTAY



Vol. 10 No. 5
OCTOBER - 1964

AN A.A. MEETING IN PRINT

ADOPTED AS THE VOICE OF ALCOHOLICS

ANONYMOUS IN NEW ZEALAND

BY THE

New Zealand

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

of Alcoholics Anonymous

(Subscription 10/- a year to -

BOX 6458, WELLINGTON)

ALCOHOLICS **A**NONYMOUS is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol . . . that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority . . . a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants . . . they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose . . . to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Do we give in A.A. or do we receive? Both? Which comes first? One hears a good deal around A.A. about it being a selfish programme. Many good friends of A.A. who know us well think we are wonderfully unselfish. What is the truth? It seems important for we children of chaos to try and find this out.

An Alcoholic's recovery starts when he realises that he suffers from a serious and progressive disease for which there is no cure but a treatment that will hold his disease in check. Doctors say that alcoholism is truly a disease but different from most physical diseases in that the patient is usually the last to recognise his condition or seek help. He is very resistant to any suggestion that he needs help and cannot, in fact, be helped until he sees the need and is willing to accept it. In other words the patient in this disease must diagnose himself.

Having done this and accepted the A.A. treatment all the evidence is that a sound and permanent recovery depends on our being able to maintain this attitude to our disease. The better results we are getting the more we should continue to apply the effective treatment we have found. Unfortunately, with the return of physical health and improvement in our affairs, it is so easy to start to think that our problems are over. It is said that an alky should never forget anything of his past; we need to be guided for the future by the experience of the past. These thoughts were developed from the contributor in this issue writing about experience in 12th Step work; full instructions for the situation he was in are in the chapter in the "Big Book" - "Working With Others". We would all save ourselves many heartaches and do our work better if we would remain learners in neither receiving or giving as conscious actions but remaining channels for the transmission of the A.A. message through our personal demonstration of its power. EDITOR.

MATTHEWS GROUP OPEN MEETING

In August the Matthews Group held an open meeting. Excellent speakers gave the meeting some constructive thoughts on the problem of alcoholism.

Departing from the normal procedure of having an A.A. member chair the meeting, we chose instead a member of Al-Anon, May H., who controlled the evening so capably that everyone thought she was an experienced veteran. She had acute insight into the heart of each speaker's story, and her comments kept alight a keen interest in the audience.

Visitors who spoke were Tom, Sally, Jeff, Joe, Basil, Mack and Mazie. Inside speakers were Wally Te H., Ron J. and Phil P.

After a tasty supper served by our caterers a presentation was made to our oldest and most sincere friend, Harry M. on behalf of the members of the Matthews A.A. Group in appreciation of the long and loyal work that he has done for the group.

The message passed on by all those loyal friends who attended was avidly received and the boys up here are still talking about the great success you made of the evening. Special thanks to our Chairwoman, May H. God bless you good people; come again to our next supper evening.

Wally Te H.- Sec.

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The SMALLEST GOOD DEED is better

than the GRANDEST GOOD INTENTION.

HAWERA TURNED IT ON

The weekend of October 10-11th found many A.As. arriving in Hawera in brilliant weather (the first beautiful days, the locals told us they had seen in months) for the Central Area Assembly Meeting and a Public Meeting at night.

The Area Assembly brought 11 delegates from Groups and a goodly number of Observers. Snow C., Gisborne, Secretary, was missed in his onerous position of Secretary, but the minutes were taken by an Acting Secretary for the day. It was a lively meeting and many issues were discussed which gave further proof, if necessary, of the immense value of these meetings.

At night a Public Meeting was held and there was a large audience. Mr. Finer, the Mayor of Hawera, and yet another great friend of A.A., chaired the Meeting. The film 'One Day at a Time' was shown and appreciated by one and all. We do not see it around so very much these days. Remarks from people around and all A.As. seemed to imply that it brought the Story and Origin of A.A. home so well that it takes some beating. This was followed by speakers and summing up by the Mayor.

A delicious afternoon tea, buffet tea and supper was put on for all present and our thanks go to Hawera for this grand effort.

Goodbyes were said over the proverbial Coffee & Tea drink by all who gathered at Dick O'D's place (thank you Eileen, we guess you did the preparations) on Sunday morning. We all agreed that it was over too quickly and that surely must be the sign of a happy weekend.

COMING EVENTS

NORTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY -

K A I T A I A -

14TH NOVEMBER, 1964

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AN EXPERIENCE IN MAKING AMENDS

I have been asked to write of an experience I had recently which involved disclosing the fact that I was an alcoholic to other people. To put the story into perspective a brief resumé of my drinking career is required, but this is not a case history.

I started drinking over 20 years ago and was immediately in minor difficulties at home and away from home. Nine years ago I married and I kept drinking, though to a different pattern, until I joined A.A. last December through the intervention of non alcoholic friends.

Throughout my drinking I had been able to maintain my job, avoid hospitals and the law and my wife and children had stayed with me. Therefore on recovery I saw no reason to advertise my illness or to disclose the fact that I had joined A.A. to everyone. Amongst 'everyone' I included my parents.

I was loth to advise my Father, who still enjoys his drinking, and I thought, with good reason, he would consider it weak - "I can, why can't you". My Mother is not in the best of health and is liable to be upset very easily. I reasoned that as I had not been living with them for nine years they would not have noticed the progress of the disease and seeing me now happy and settled with my wife and family, would dismiss my earlier days as rather excessively dosed with wild oats, but no more. As far as I could see there was no way of making amends without hurting them, or hurting my pride. Because my pride was involved I knew somehow I was wrong. So I asked for help. Help came in Ian's comment that 'only good could come of it' if I told them. That put it fairly back to me.

After one or two shaky prayers I told them.

I am unable to describe sincerely what actually followed. It is a private moment I shall remember forever. Mother's eyes forgave me every-

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thing, and the fear I had of my Father's reaction was swallowed in shame that I had doubted him. I learned for the first time that Mother had prayed for 20 years for this day - that she had realised instinctively that something happened to me when I drank and she lived in fear for me, my wife whom she loves and my family.

I need not go on - A.A. has made two more people, non-alcoholics, very happy and has proved once more to me that help is available and that 'only good' can come of asking for it.

G. - WELLINGTON

THE ALATEEN MESSAGE GOES SOUTH

During the August holidays two members of the Wellington Alateen Group travelled to Invercargill to speak at an open meeting of A.A.

Sue stayed in a home where there were two children, Brent and Vaughan.

Michael stopped off in Dunedin and spoke to a family of four teenagers; Mary, David, Jennifer and Geoffrey.

On Saturday night in Invercargill there was a very good muster of A.A.'s, Al-Anons and two teenagers. Although the number of teenagers was small, an atmosphere of understanding was created out of which an Alateen group could easily grow.

Returning to Dunedin, Michael spoke at another meeting arranged by Al-Anon and chaired by an A.A. (Burt). After Nena (A.A.) and an Al-Anon speaker (Anne), Michael spoke telling of his experience of living with a sober alcoholic. There were about 20 teenagers present and as a result of the get-together an Alateen group has been started in Dunedin.

Search for the good points in the other fellow;
he has to do the same with you, you know.

REFLECTIONS OF A FRIENDSTEPS 10 & 11

It is well said that those who have fallen on the highroad of life and have returned to the ways of goodness are people who really enrich the world by their tolerance and understanding of others, are shock-proof because of the experience of their own weakness and waywardness, and have acquired a practical down-to-earthness which nothing can delude. How perfectly do these two steps illustrate this in the programme of sobriety in A.A.

The Alcoholic has acquired the fundamental virtue of humility and has exercised himself in this virtue. But he is too conscious of his limitations to be duped by the thought of his newly-acquired excellence, or to be misled by his aspirations towards better living. He realizes that this problem of maintaining sobriety is one that he will have to contend with as long as there is the danger of his returning to his former ways, that is, as long as he lives. So, lest he fall into indolence because of the record of his sobriety and lest he be led into a false security, he keeps an eye on his conduct, his mental attitudes, and in general on how he is living his new life. He continues to take personal inventory for this purpose and also to see where he can make further progress.

This could very profitably be done daily for a few minutes at the end of his day. It is not a question of introspection and unhealthy self-analysis, but rather an optimistic and realistic desire to advance from good to better. I would think it a good idea to make this exercise in self-knowledge in the presence of God in some way, this prevents it from developing into a too-subjective affair. After all, the Alcoholic knows his dire need of the help of God, so endeavours to increase his contacts, as it

were, with the omnipotent God; and to Whom better should he expose his frailty than to Him, who alone can give him the grace to keep sober? This manner of making the personal inventory before God has a two-fold benefit; the Alcoholic looks out from himself - a thing he should always aim at as directing a deadly blow to his mental attitude of self-centredness - and secondly, since he realizes that God sees and knows all things, he will be honest, because he knows he cannot deceive Him. Looking back over his day, then, he sees the good points and thanks God for them, and honestly admits his failings and begs for strength to overcome them and do better for the future. This is a valuable type of prayer, but, in a sense, it is negative, being concerned with the correction and eradication of bad points. There is a more positive prayer, which the eleventh step indicates to us: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Prayer really means contact with God; it either adores Him in His own supreme greatness, or it thanks Him for His benefits, or begs pardon for faults, or asks favours of Him. Whatever form the prayer takes, it is contact with God which is the essential and most important thing in it. The role of meditation is to reflect on truths so that they impress us in such a way that we are convinced of them to the extent that they directly influence us in the living of our lives; but above all meditation prepares the way for us so that when we pray to God about them, we really mean what we say. These "eternal truths" as we call them, need reflecting upon as they do not hit us as, for instance, an item in the morning newspaper: these truths are hidden, and though the good living depends on them, they are not self-evident at first sight. Meditation, then, convinces us of these truths, and thereby, we must of necessity become better, richer, more

integral persons for it. I believe the reason why there is so much mental immaturity, shallowness and narrowness among people to-day is the old one: "there is none who thinketh in his heart."

Prayer is necessary for all men to be saved and to attain fulness and happiness in this life; therefore it must be within the capacities of everyone, it must be easy, and it is. Prayer is really heart-to-heart conversation, in our own words, with God, Who we know loves us and desires all good for us, especially the only really important and essential good of our salvation for eternity. Prayer understood in this way is not a burden but a pleasure and relief to which we instinctively turn; it only stands to reason that we would desire to share our experiences, worries, anxieties, with One Who loves us and Who can certainly help us.

With typical humility, the Alcoholic does not pray for any great gifts or benefits but only for knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out. This is a petition of ringing sincerity, and the Lord will hear it for sure as it is one which certainly pleases Him and is for our good. He may for a time leave us with our failings, but He will hear us and grant our request in His own good time, and not only will the delay profit us, but in His goodness He will grant that all our past history of failures and the rest, will be turned to our benefit as we read in Holy Writ: "To those who love God all things co-operate unto good."

COMING EVENTS ...

B L E N H E I M CENTRAL AREA ASSEMBLY

5TH DECEMBER

K A I T A I A NORTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY

14TH NOVEMBER

THE NEW COMER

Reading that article in "Outlook" last month about the trials and troubles of 12th Step work made me wonder whether it isn't better to take a tougher line with some alcoholics.

This may sound a bit hard, but I think in certain cases it does pay. I am thinking particularly of one man I approached last year. I was kind, understanding and sympathetic, also a chauffeur and general factotum!

I took him by the hand and led him to meeting after meeting, at his request I met his wife, relations and creditors and told them all what a good chap he was going to be in the future.

I didn't realise it at the time, but I was not only 12th stepping him, but I was also doing the 12 steps for him.

Eventually I got another 'customer' and had to leave the first one to his own devices. The result - he stopped going to meetings. He was so used to being looked after that he didn't have the initiative to do anything for himself.

It was a week or two before I found out what had happened, then I went around to see him. This time - on the advice of an older and wiser fellow AA - I laid it on the line for him.

I told him he now knew enough about A.A. and his problem to make up his own mind as to whether he wanted sobriety - if he did, well it was time he did something about it. The meetings were always open to him, but he'd have to get there under his own steam and start putting his affairs in order by himself. I said that I, or other members would give him all the advice he wanted, but he had got to do something about it for himself.

Sobriety, I told him, is in the long run attained by our own efforts. If he thought it wasn't worth the effort I wouldn't be losing any

sleep over his decision - but I was quitting and it was up to him.

Going back home I began to wonder if I had done the right thing. Maybe I should have started all over again. Maybe this wasn't the right way to treat an alcoholic. Perhaps it would be my fault if he started drinking again. I had quite a sleepless night over the fellow.

The next evening, there he was at an A.A. meeting. When the meeting was over he told me that the telling off I had given him was just what he needed. He had come to depend on me for his A.A. as well as for advice and transport. He has never looked back since, and has become a valued member of A.A.

Now-a-days, I still go out of my way to make things as easy as possible for a newcomer, but when I think he can stand on his own feet I tell him so and leave him to it, and it is working well.

JOHN - AUCKLAND.

FROM THE "BIG BOOK"

We grow by our willingness..to rectify errors and convert them into assets. The painful past may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with the problem. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those which have not, and when the occasion requires it, each member of it should be only too willing to bring former mistakes, not matter how grievous, out of their hiding places.

(The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" p. 124)

Between the great things that we cannot do and the small things we will not do, the danger is that we shall do nothing. Adolphe Monod.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Dear Fellow Alkies,

There has been some correspondence in your columns with regard to the Lord's Prayer at meetings. I am one who can see no place for it at an A.A. meeting. Its place is in a church. It is a part of organised religion. A.A. is not religious.

In a long time round A.A. meetings, I have noticed it is always the "oldsters" who clamour for its introduction. While I understand their gratitude to a God they have found, I deplore their forgetfulness. Our new-comers are mostly pretty Godless, they find the Serenity Prayer hard enough to swallow, so they definitely choke on the Lord's Prayer.

During their drinking ups and downs they hear many jokes and digs at A.A. as a "religious or pious lot of Bible bangers", so that, when driven to seek help, they naturally approach A.A. with "their tongue in their cheek" so to speak.

If the chairman reads the 'Preamble' he reads that A.A. is NOT allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution, etc. and the new-comer feels re-assured. Then up pops the Lord's Prayer, and he shies like a colt.

Many old-timers merely shrug and say "he wasn't ready", "he needs to drink some more", or any other smug, self-righteous inanities of this nature, quite forgetting what they were like some three, four, or six or maybe ten years ago. Also forgetting that this new-comer may be killed or kill someone else before he returns, or gets another chance to return.

Let us not forget our primary purpose - "To stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety." Let us give them time, as we were given time, to gain sober thinking,

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be less touchy and critical, and to become more open-minded; so that the "spiritual" in our programme can be more easily absorbed, and not the "religious" drive them away, in those critical early days and meetings.

There are many churches for worship and our "oldsters" can make ready use of them. Let us not try to turn A.A. into a church, and "Mainstay" into a Bible. The new-comer is the life blood of A.A. - we owe him a fair deal.

SOBER ALKIE.

It is not general practice to use the Lord's Prayer to close meetings in New Zealand as it is in U.S.A. It is a matter for group decision; clearly there is nothing against its use. A.A. stands firmly for the need of a spiritual experience and belief in God as you understand Him for permanent sobriety (see paragraph following listing of 12 Steps in Big Book - appendix 2 and Chapter "We Agnostics") but does not insist on such beliefs. Or on recovery for that matter!!

This subject is now closed. EDITOR.

PUBLIC MEETING - LOWER HUTT

ST. JAMES CHURCH HALL -

WEDNESDAY, 28TH OCTOBER -

8 P.M.

FILMS .. FILMS ..

SPEAKERS .. SPEAKERS ..

SUPPER.. SUPPER..

TO ALL MEMBERS ..

WE CAN'T SELL A.A. - WE CAN SUPPORT A.A.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE -

ONE DAY
AT A
TIME

FILMS ON ALCOHOLISM

There are 17 films available from the National Film Library, Clifton Terrace, Wellington. The Library extend the privilege to A.A. groups to have these films on loan through our registration number A1706. We give an undertaking that the films will be shown on a projector in good working order by a capable operator. PLEASE write direct to the library giving date of showing and our number (A1706). At least 2 weeks' notice is necessary and always give alternative films. It is safest to book films FIRST and announce showing later. The films are in regular demand. There is no charge but borrowers pay postage one way.

LATEST FILMS ARE -

D307/1 "For Those Who Drink" Dr. Gordon Bell lectures on addiction and its treatment. (38 mins.)
A2798 "It's Best to Know" Well known radio and T.V. commentator and star, Fred Allen, talks to youngsters about the facts of alcohol (10 mins.)
Both films in Black and White. Full list from Librarian, Box 6458, Wellington.

TAPE LIBRARY

A great range of tapes may be borrowed through the Librarian, C/- Box 192, Wanganui. The list has been revised and will be available soon through Box 6458, Wellington. You may send a blank tape and any tape will be recorded for you.

Recent additions are:

11. Tom P. "Sanity" 14. "A Doctor's Story"
12. "An Executive's Story"
17. "Our Way of Recovery"; An A.A. Looks at the Twelve Steps.
20. "A Housewife and Mother."