

**A.A.**  
*is our*  
**MAINSTAY**

May the Peace and Joy of Christmas  
Remain with you all through  
the New Year.

Christmas 1954





*"Thank you for Daddy being sober this Christmas. That was all I wanted. But thanks for throwing in the doll."*

NORTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY AT KAITAIA

It was heart warming to see so many A.A.'s travel such a long distance to attend the Fourth Northern Area Assembly at Kaitaia on Saturday, 14th November. They were rewarded by experiencing a day of outstanding A.A. plus warm hospitality. The Kaitaia group is four strong and when we say they are strong; what other group of 4 would take on the entertainment of 50 visitors?

The business meeting chaired by Pup R. soon dispensed with the business part of the day. The Secretary obtained names and addresses for the Northern Area Assembly portion of the N.Z.A.A. Directory.

An open A.A. meeting was chaired by Cliff B. of the Kaitaia group. This was an excellent meeting with A.A. speakers and one from Al-Anon. The buffet tea was a wonderful spread enjoyed by all.

At 7.30 an open meeting was held. Des.D. was in the chair and in his usual dignified manner introduced the speakers, outlined the principles of A.A. and compered the film "For Those Who Drink". There were 70 people present.

After the meeting all were entertained to supper. Next day the exodus of A.A.'s commenced ---to Whangarei; to Auckland; and a car load to Hamilton.

A year hence Kaitaia plans to be host for another Area Assembly. If you want a grand weekend of A.A. fellowship save up for Kaitaia, 1965.

LEWIS G.

.....  
COMING EVENTS . . . . .

VISIT OF STAFF MEMBER FROM G.S.O. NEW YORK

Eve M., for some long time Secretary of the annual General Service Conference in New York and long time on the staff there will visit N.Z. for about 2 weeks towards the end of March, 1965.

THE "MAINSTAY" TEAM

SUE JEAN NORAH

MAXIE IAN HEATHER

THANK YOU ALL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY  
TO SERVE THE FELLOWSHIP THROUGH  
THE WORK OF PUBLISHING YOUR



" M A I N S T A Y "



ADOPTED AS THE VOICE  
OF

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN NEW ZEALAND  
BY THE

New Zealand



GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

of Alcoholics Anonymous

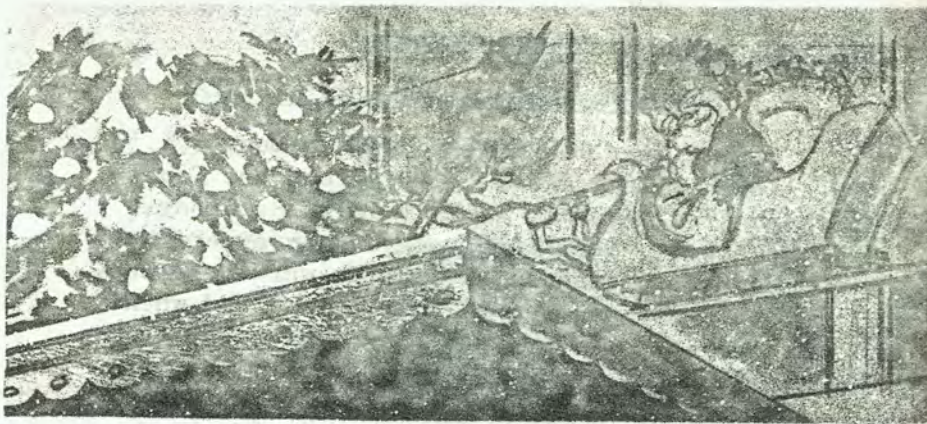


SUBSCRIPTION 10/- per year

" M A I N S T A Y "

BOX 6458 WELLINGTON N.Z.





## The Christmas Fighters

“THE thing I’m really dreading,” said Recently Divorced, “is Christmas.”

“Dreading Christmas?” asked Recently Sober. “What about New Year’s Eve?”

Since this conversation took place in August, one might seriously wonder if it weren’t a slight case of misplaced anxiety. But to the really dedicated Christmas Fighter, time is not an object. I know. I used to be one.

True, I didn’t usually start fulminating until the Monday after Thanksgiving when the turkey advertisements came down and the Santa Clauses went up all over New York City. And the wreaths. And the bells. And the trees. Off with the yellow and brown, on with the red and green. And in my case, up

the rebels. “It’s so commercial,” I would begin. “Disgusting and commercial!” There usually *was* a commercial, piping cheerily and obligingly from a radio or TV set in the background, “X number of shopping days until Christmas,” to lend support to my words. “Listen to that,” I would say. “Just listen.”

Of course I wasn’t the only one. There were plenty of voices raised in protest, and still are. “How commercial!” they cry up and down the land as they pour over the catalogues to decide what to buy, and thumb through the ads to decide what to ask for, or get trampled into insensibility in the merry free-for-all that is known as Christmas Shopping.

Perhaps there are some purists who eschew all that, ask not and



give not and let December twentyfifth go by. (I heard of a lady, not quite a purist, who shopped and sent her presents in July with a "Do not open until Christmas" written firmly on the outside so she could avoid her holiday hysteria.)

But most Christmas Fighters aren't that well organized. My own rebellion was a sort of over-all dragging of the feet, shopping too late rather than too early, thus missing the worst of the rush, but also missing the best of the things I wanted to buy. Not wrapping anything until I was en route in a taxicab, if I could get a taxicab, and then letting it all go with some creased paper and a bit of tape. Complaining to some members of the family about having to cope with other members of the family. Being late for Christmas Dinner, slow to open my presents and dreading the moment when others opened the haphazard ones I gave. (And yet once upon a time, as a child, I had made my presents by hand, wrapped them elaborately, and stayed awake all night. What had happened, that now made it all so gray?)

I couldn't put it all down to my drinking days, although the last holiday before I came into AA was certainly the original gray Christmas. My hands shook so I could not open the mound of packages prepared for me; Christmas dinner was an endless ordeal. The next year, very new in AA, I remember hearing that the holidays were a tricky time for us, which is perhaps true, in the beginning, laden as they are with old associations, obligations or, perhaps, new loneliness. So I armed myself for the "tricky time," advanced towards it with all my AA reinforcements, phone numbers, and Slogans, which was fine then and a good idea. But the militant mood persisted in the intervening years.

And then, suddenly, everything changed. The family that had seemed as immovable as the rock of Manhattan itself dispersed in one short

year. One branch went to Hawaii, another to Vermont, a third just decided to get out of town for the holidays. Christmas became a blank, just another twentyfour hours I could do with as I wished. Go to friends, not go to friends, go to church, go to the movies - it was up to me. I began to heave a sigh of relief but it turned into a sigh that was oddly bereft; and then I started to behave in a most peculiar way. It was not planned, or thought out, or deliberate. It was instinct, impulse, spontaneity revived; a motor that had been dormant since childhood turned over and began to cough a little, chug once or twice, and finally catch on. A hum filled a silent space.

The first sign of it came about two weeks before C-Day. I was sitting in my apartment with an AA friend and I said: "Listen, I haven't had a Christmas tree for ages. Let's go and get one." We rushed out and picked and chose and haggled with the sidewalk tree people, and then we picked and chose and haggled some more over ornaments, and whether snow or no snow would be better, and whether it would be more fun with lights. Perhaps that's the key word: fun. It might have been for fun, that tree. Anyhow we got our selections back to the apartment and invited some neighbors over, and then another AA friend, and soon the place was full of people deciding first that the star at the top was boring, then deciding it wasn't.

Once the tree was up in all its glory, another idea developed. I had two AA friends whose reservations about the holidays were as tried and true as my own, confirmed Christmas Fighters of the old school. One had a Family Affair to face up to in the afternoon; the other, as a matter of conviction and resolve, had Nothing to do. I called them both. "I know how Against Everything we all are," I started out, "and how we hate the phony sentimentality and all, but I've got a plan. Maybe if just the three of us did something on Christmas Day, it would

be fun. How about breakfast at my place?" "Perfect," said Family Affair. "It'll give me the strength to face the rest of it." Nothing To Do was more cautious: "Well," he said, "I guess it's all right if it's us." So it was decided.

Inasmuch as we were all avowedly Against Everything, the question of presents was not even discussed. So when I got my next inspiration I didn't even fight it. "I never said I wouldn't," I told myself, and plunged off into the depths of the Five-And-Ten, looking for jokes, odds, ends and trinkets that would fill two Christmas stockings. When I got it all home I had too much for the red mesh socks the Five-And-Ten doles out, but I remembered a pair of red tights someone had given me the year before (wrong size, unreturned) and I filled both legs, marked them "His" and "Hers" and put them under the tree, laughing immoderately. But on Christmas morning when I walked sleepily into the living room to start getting breakfast and saw the tree, the decorations and the "stockings", the whole effect brought me up short. Supposing they didn't laugh. Supposing Family Affair just got more depressed, supposing Nothing To Do got indignant. The doorbell rang. It was a little late to worry.

There they were: Family Affair, a little in the vanguard, a square package grasped firmly in both hands, obviously the spokeswoman. "I know how Against Everything we all are," she began, "but I happened to be in a hardware store and I know you need these and would never have the sense to go get them" She pressed the package on me. "It's not sentimental," she finished briskly, "it's coffee filters." Nothing To Do was more laconic. "Here," he said, handing me a small oil painting of bright spring flowers, executed and framed by himself. Since he is an artist by profession, this was quite a present. For one ghastly moment I felt my eyes filling with tears, but then, luckily, they both caught

sight of my Christmas trappings in the living room. Following a stunned moment of disbelief, they burst out laughing. Breakfast was one of the highly successful social events of that season.

What came back to all three of us that year (the motor that started to hum again) was, of course, that much maligned X factor, the Christmas Spirit. I didn't figure that out for myself. Another AA friend to whom I described our odd celebration, explained it for me. "It wasn't odd," she said, "it just worked because it was spontaneous. It was the spontaneity that made it. Nobody was obliged to do anything. There weren't any preconceived notions. Everybody just did what came naturally."

If joy eludes the noise maker and cheer leader at your average party, real joy, alas, also gives a wide berth to the sulker, the foot dragger, the complainer and the worrier. There seems to me now no more point to being joyless on December twenty-fifth than to wake up and deliberately encourage a bad humor on any other day of the year. Christmas holds the same promise as a faultless Spring day. And the same goes for New Year's Eve, Labor Day, the Fourth of July, your anniversary, my birthday. You never know until you go out to meet it what any given day is going to be, but the way you go to meet it surely makes a difference. As we all remember from experience, a change in attitude can have effects more radical than a change in external circumstances.

And so, dear Recently Divorced and dear Recently Sober, though I know how Against Everything we all are - they very best of us, at moments (and yes, these are "tricky times" for us) - still, we are also for the joy of living or we wouldn't be here, wouldn't have picked up this magazine to read, wouldn't know it existed. The Christmas Spirit is just another evidence of that joy. So why fight it? Let go and let Santa Claus.

To the rest of the membership who are galloping full tilt towards the holidays, arms outstretched to embrace it all, I say, "Wait for me this year - I'm coming too!"

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NEW YEAR THOUGHT

Closed eyes can't see the white roses  
Cold hands can't hold them you know  
Breath that is stilled can't gather the  
    Odours that sweet from them blow;  
Death with a peace beyond dreaming  
    Its children of earth does endow  
Life is the time we can help them  
    So give them the flowers NOW.

Here are the struggles and strivings  
    Here are the cares and the tears  
Now is the time to be smoothing the  
    frowns and furrows and sears;  
What to closed ears are kind sayings?  
    What to hushed heart is deep vow?  
Nought can avail after parting  
    So give them the flowers-NOW.

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Anon. quoted from Dr. Murray Banks.

When you are right, you can afford to  
    keep your temper.

RECOVERY IS A FAMILY AFFAIR.

(If you're lucky enough to still have a family)

Drinking isolates most homes from the outside world. Father may have laid aside all normal activities—clubs, civic duties, sports. When he renews interest in such things, a feeling of jealousy may arise. The family may feel they hold a mortgage on dad.....instead of developing new channels of activity for themselves, mother and children may demand that he stay home and make up the deficiency.

At the very beginning, the couple ought to frankly face the fact that each will have to yield here and there if the family is going to play an effective part in the new life. Father will necessarily spend much time with other Alcoholics, but this activity should be balanced. New acquaintances who know nothing of alcoholism might be made and thoughtful attention given to their needs. The problems of the community might engage their attention. Though the family has no religious connections, they may wish to make contact with, or take membership in a religious body.

Alcoholics who have derided religious people will be helped by such contacts. Being possessed of a spiritual experience, the alcoholic will find he has much in common with these people, though he may differ with them on many matters. If he does not argue about religion he will make new friends and is sure to find new avenues of usefulness and pleasure.

We have been speaking to you of serious and sometimes tragic things. We have been dealing with alcohol in its worst aspect. But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. We try not to indulge in cynacism over the state of the nations, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders. We think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness.

(Big Book - p. 131)



*Dear Friends:*

*Gratitude is just about the finest attribute we can have, and how deeply we of AA realize this at Christmastime. We know that our very lives, our miraculous new chance to live, to learn, to grow and to serve, is the supreme gift of Grace which has come to us from Him who presides over us all. May we joyfully meditate upon these precious blessings as never before.*

*Together with all here at AA's World Headquarters, Lois joins me in warmest greetings to each and all of you, and we send our confident faith that the year to come will be counted among the best that our Fellowship has ever known.*

*Bill*



When the Sanhedrin had Peter and John and the other Apostles on trial before them, after the death of Christ, that wise old Jew, Gamaliel said "Let them be. If this thing (Christianity) be of men it will surely die. If it be from God it will endure for ever." Like Father Michael I believe that God is the author of A.A. and that it will endure for as long as there is need for it, i.e., for so long as there are still suffering alcoholics in the world. This Fellowship will not die, and, as nothing in this world is static it must progress, so perhaps we can look in retrospect at the progress made in 1964.

The major event was, of course, the first Dominion Assembly of A.A.'s at Massey in February. At this gathering the seal of approval was given to the formation of the General Service Conference, which was provisionally formed at a meeting of delegates in Wellington in July 1961. Almost immediately thereafter pressures were put upon the steering committee to convene a Dominion Assembly, but Sel. and Ian in their wisdom decided not to do this until the demand for it came from the grass-roots level, i.e., from the Groups and the individual membership. So they counselled patience and when the steering committee met in Christchurch in October, 1963, at the same time as the Mainland members decided to form the Southern Area Assembly, it deemed that the time had come and so the Massey Assembly was decided on.

In August the first meeting of delegates was held at Arahina where some important decisions were made, a new steering committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Sel, and Doug. asked the General Service Conference to take over the editing and publication of "Mainstay". The steering committee was directed to confer with the Justice, Prisons and Health Departments concerning hospitalisation, treatment and Institutional Group matters. The steering

committee met in Wellington on the 17th September and spent a full day in conferences with the heads of these departments. Minutes of these conferences have been circulated to delegates and all I need to say here is that we were warmly and graciously received by Drs. Turbott, Mirams and Blake-Palmer of the Health Department and by Dr. Robson, Mr. Watt and Mr. Williams of the Justice and Prison's Departments. They all assured us of their fullest co-operation, support and help, and, indeed, these discussions have already borne fruit.

Meanwhile, progress was being made at all levels throughout New Zealand, notably in the formation of the Northern Area Assembly. In the limited space at my disposal I can touch only on the highlights of the year and the ones that stand out in my memory are Knock-na-gree, Kaikoura and the visit of Father Michael from across the Tasman Sea. All these things (and there are no doubt many more that I don't even know about) add up to dynamic living progress of this Fellowship in New Zealand and, I believe, an increase of public goodwill towards it.

"SCRIBLEX"

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\*\*\*\*\* A.A. \*\*\* A.A. \*\*\*\*\*

FROM A READER -

I recall a speaker saying at our last meeting that if we feel a bit browned off we should count our blessings. I reckon he has the right idea. When I started to count mine I did not get far before I realised just how well off I am. I have a happy home and good A.A. friends and my job is always there. I have my sobriety and that is a wonderful blessing: I could go on with a list far too long for "Mainstay". But I would like to say to other alkies—if at times you get a bit down to it — just relax and count your blessings.

BILL R. - INVERCARGILL.

HUMILITY . . . OR AUDACITY?

We frequently hear at meetings and read in our various A.A. publications of the many-sided nature of the alcoholic, and his ability to switch behaviour according to circumstances and surroundings. You've heard it said at times... "If the company is pious, we too can be (or act) pious....if a little villainy is called for, we can readily oblige."

This subject takes our minds across the years to part of the school-poem "My Name Is Legion"---

Within this person there's a crowd---

There's one that's humble, one that's  
proud;

One that's broken-hearted for his sins  
And one that, unrepentant, sits and grins.

.....  
From corroding care I should be free  
If I could once determine which is me.

Fifty years ago, William James said ".... there are as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of people about whose opinion we care".

To bring order into our personal lives, through unity within one's self, to end the civil war in our souls and gain inner peace is surely the object of the Programme we strive to follow. Our real struggle is not with external forces which we claim shape our lives, but with the inner forces which disturb our tranquility.

Our approach to A.A. we often feel, was originally prompted by a type of "beaten to our knees" humility, and yet reflection shows our step into our first A.A. meeting as the boldest move of our lives. To approach a group of complete strangers, and, subsequently, God as we understand Him, with a plea for assistance with our overwhelming problems.....does this require humility.....or audacity? To live the quiet

truly spiritual life requires an effort vigorous beyond anything we have previously attempted.

The Fourth Step uncovers not only the bad things in our lives, but the good things every individual needs to cultivate, and here the ability to be many things can have a positive application. Perhaps the early members had this in mind when they exhorted us to "BE fearless and thorough", so let's humbly try to use the virtues of audacity, boldness and vigour in our approach to serenity.

Anonymous, Sydney.

THE REVIVER---Sept. 1964.

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CENTRAL AREA ASSEMBLY.

Blenheim held the first Central A.A. Area Assembly in the South Island, on Saturday, 5th. December 1964.

Not knowing there was a little space left in the December "Mainstay" I venture a brief report from inadequate notes. More will appear from the Minutes in January. Twelve groups were represented including Kaikoura, Blenheim, Nelson, Monday Night (Wn.), St. John's, Island Bay, Porirua, Wanganui, Hawera and Gisborne. Nearly 200 attended the Public Meeting at night which was chaired by the Mayor. Five speakers including an Al-Anon member presented an excellent story of the workings of A.A. after the films "To Your Health" and "A.A. In Industry" .

It was good to have Jim.R. of Invercargill with us as they are having a Southern Area Assembly there in February. There were whispers that Nelson Will ask for an Assembly next year. This would be well supported we feel ; they should be encouraged in this venture by the good support given to Kataia reported in this issue.

P. Wn.

SOUTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY DIRECTORY WILL BE INCLUDED WITH JANUARY ISSUE.

## \*\*\* FURTHER BITS FROM FATHER MICHAEL \*\*\*

.....by 1939 there were about 100 A.A.'s and one day the founder wrote down the twelve steps verbatim as we know them now. he said he was sorry he ever let them change the second step from what he wrote it to be. He wrote the second step to read 'We came to believe that God could restore us to sanity'. The others thought that this would frighten away the atheist and the agnostic - and so they broke it down a bit to read as we know it to-day, 'A power greater than ourselves' - but God comes into the third step....If we want to overcome our sickness of alcoholism - if we desire to live without drinking there is no known way, I believe, in the world to-day by which we can arrest our drinking other than by this prescription that hangs here on the wall....This is the prescription that is handed to any alcoholic who comes into a meeting, it is all we have to give him....What I have to do frequently now is to sit down often and meditate on my drinking from the first drink I took to the time I reached A.A. and see and analyse the damage that it did to me under various headings, for I have to convince myself after 14 years without a drink that I am an alcoholic, and powerless over alcohol.....I believe we should all have a look at ourselves and, if necessary, write down a case history of ourselves. What did this do to me, say financially, - money is an important thing - we all admit this - its very hard to get it out of alcoholics after they get sober. What did it do to my domestic life? Its good to look back and see just what damage this thing did and now we can look at it with honest minds and just value it properly. What did it do to me mentally, - how many times did it affect me? Did I have blackouts? What did it do to me physically?....Only the alcoholics know what its like to chew a piece of meat in the morning and find the meat getting bigger and his throat getting smaller.....

(Full tape of above 55 mins. from Library  
Box 160, Wanganui)

....A.A.....A.A.

A.A.....A.A.....

Naturally there are a number of prerequisites to living with an alcoholic but these are not nearly so rigorous as those pertinent to living with one suffering from diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer or any other so-called permanent diseases. In my opinion the most important prerequisites to living with an alcoholic are:

1. Love and compassion; 2. humility and openmindedness; 3. understanding the nature and effect of alcohol (including-if you drink at all, appraisal of the effects of your drinking habits on the marital relations as well as on the family relationship as a whole); 4. co-operation with one's spouse in regard to those activities that are essential to continued sobriety such as regular and frequent attendance at A.A. meetings, helping others to achieve sobriety by personal contact, etc.; and 5. active and open participation in related activities such as the al-anon Family Group, A.A. open meetings and social functions, A.A. conventions etc.

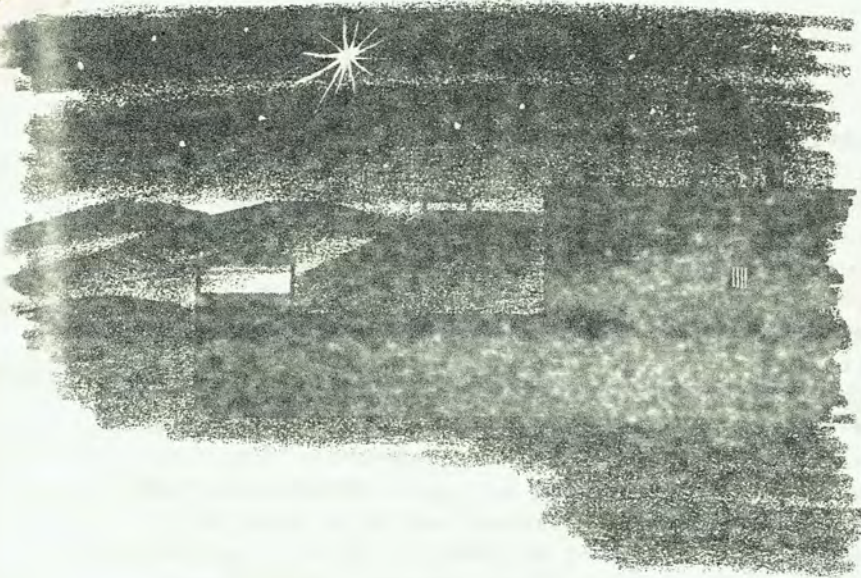
Most non-alcoholics with alcoholic spouses feel that no-one had to face problems that are in any way comparable to yours. Rest assured, this is far from the truth. My wife and I too were knocking on the door of the divorce court when, through the Grace of God we found this new way of life. For this I feel entirely inadequate to express my gratitude because I am a home loving man and had I lost my wife and my family, I doubt very seriously if I would have been here today trying in the best way I know how, to help you find a gratifying solution to the problem that now confronts you and your family.

Grateful Al-Anon Family Group  
member.

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AA .. AA .. AA



## Christmas Note from a Prison Cell

**A moving tribute to three guys named Ed, from a very grateful group**

It is most incongruous to wish the imprisoned a "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!" A man behind bars cannot possibly spend that holy day in merry mood. And the first day of the New Year is *not* a happy one. We receive the best wishes of our loved ones and our friends—however, the "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" they offer us is done with tongue in cheek. These are the days when each of us searches his own heart

and realizes the error of his ways. We wish each other, in here, a "Merry Christmas" and our hearts are heavy as we do so. And the first day of the New Year finds us mouthing that oft repeated phrase, "Happy New Year!" but we don't mean it! We're not happy—we are miserable about this whole sorry mess.

On the other hand, we give to our friends outside, our best wishes for a holiday season—and if ever Man was well meaning, it is the man behind bars who sends to those in the free world his deep-felt expression. We buy many Christmas cards. We write many letters—even to those who have long forgotten us. For you see, we want to be remembered by *everybody!* And if our reminder that we are still alive brings answer from someone who had purposefully, or

inadvertently made it his business to forget about us, then all is right in the world.

At this Christmas, however, we are faced with a new problem. And we are happy about this. For you see a new problem means there has been a change—and changes, as such, are uncommon in these confines. Some 30 odd inmates have been blessed with a brand new friendship. We know that it is a poor word to describe what we feel for the men of A.A. who are coming in here. These are more than "friends". These are the men who give up that blessed freedom of the outside and dare to imprison themselves for a few hours with us each week. They forgo the delights of companionship with family and relations and friends. They pass up the movies, and the T-V and the get-togethers of the free world. Yes, and some give up a much needed sleep for the next days work—just to come here.

What do we feel for these men?

How do we show our appreciation?

Do we send them the usual card of appreciation? But that is too inadequate. The pleasant jingles are not for us. Our feelings are too deep to be expressed by the synthetic composings of the card writer. Do we send a gift? The Lord alone knows we wish to do so. But then our labours are, naturally, restricted and the suddenness of our acquaintanceship has left us without that forethought of anticipation. Too, any gift we would wish to send, would necessarily, have to be the best—nothing less would suffice. And we would not be satisfied with a present hastily constructed. We would rather a whole year's planning go into our expression.

Which leaves us but one avenue at this holiday period; a written token of our deep felt appreciation of all you are trying to do for us—and are already doing. We didn't send for

22---you sought us out. Bless you ! You have given us a new hope, the promise of a new life. Bless you ! You not only hold out your helping hand during these trying days--you offer us that encouragement for the day we step outside. Bless you !

We want you to know that, in our heart of hearts we wish you long life and Happy Years !

May the good Lord bring to you and yours a measure of the joy you have given us. May the New Year give you that good health to continue your good work. Unashamed, we tell you we need you--yes, we envy you.

We envy your spirit which exemplifies the spirit of Christmas. He, in His heaven, must surely be counting the blessings you are distributing on your way through these darkened corners of the world.

We wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

(quoted from the "Grapevine". Time did not allow reference to our institutional groups but we sincerely hope it expresses their thoughts and will encourage more A.A.'s to visit them Next year we hope our friends "inside" will write their **own** Christmas message )

NEW ZEALAND ASSEMBLY

LINCOLN COLLEGE

20/21 FEB. 1965.

Accommodation and full board available from Friday night to Monday morning. £2 per day with part days at part cost.

A.A.'s

AL-ANONS

ALATEENS

BOOK EARLY THROUGH . . .

BOXES 6458 or 2827 - WELLINGTON.



"... Yes, my name is Santa Claus, and I'm an alcoholic."