

A.A.

is our

MAINSTAY

Vol. 10 No. 3
AUGUST - 1964



YOUR A.A. CALENDAR

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| <u>5th September</u> | PUBLIC MEETING KAIKOURA |
| <u>19th September</u> | SOUTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY Clyde - Central Otago |
| <u>10th October</u> | CENTRAL AREA ASSEMBLY Hawera |

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.

"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."

.....

With A.A. moving into maturity and taking responsibility for its public relations and the first meeting of the General Service Conference Delegates just over, it seems timely that we should continue over the next few months to print a Tradition each month with some quotations from the relative 'A.A.' literature and some thoughts for 'A.A.s' to consider and discuss amongst their fellow members and at meetings.

"The survival of active groups of men and women dedicated to 'A.A.s' sole purpose — HELPING THEMSELVES AND OTHERS TO LIVE WITHOUT ALCOHOL — is obviously important to the survival of the fellowship itself" — says our informal handbook for members and groups named "Partners in A.A." It continues; "The early days of A.A. provided a great deal of experience in the operation of local groups. Some groups did not survive internal stresses; others succumbed to outside pressures. From the groups that grew in vitality and service, certain guiding principles emerged. About 10 years after A.A.'s beginnings, these principles had been defined so clearly....that they were accepted unanimously as guides for the survival of groups."

When we each came to A.A. in search of sobriety we mostly had exhausted ourselves in our efforts to find sobriety for ourselves. We used the knowledge of thousands who had gone before us who had made their findings available to us through the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" and other literature. Our dire and desperate need was a great help in doing this.

With the Traditions the situation is a little different. We may not see so clearly that the survival of the Fellowship depends on enough responsibility being taken by enough A.A.'s. Some say - "Keep it simple" - (which is often in marked contrast to the way they go about their own sobriety!) and to some is synonymous with "Do nothing." Some of us see that if this translation of - "Keep it simple" - had been applied by the early A.A.'s in New York to their own activities; if they had been content to attain sobriety and develop a local group the spread of A.A. to New Zealand might have been delayed too long to be of help to our early members. Inactivity or the lack of the right kind of activity may be counted in the loss of your own sobriety as well as continued illness or death of 'alkies' unknown. We have already had enough experience in New Zealand to demonstrate that good results come from wide sharing of experience in A.A. The job of 'carrying the message' to those who are still drinking can be done in many ways and we can all help and learn by studying the experience of those who have gone before.

EDITOR.

A.A.******A.***A.***A.***A.***A.*****A.A.
Extract - 'GOD AND YOUR EMOTIONS' - F. Wedge

No one, and that includes you and me, need allow his emotions to run away with him. Emotions, like the weather, are subject to change; but, unlike the weather, something can be done about them. The best time to do it is now. Those who are always postponing never get anything done. Emotional re-education is possible at any age. Not that the aim should be to kill the emotions outright, since they are good in themselves, but rather to harness the energy of the emotions for the greatest good. Emotions are active and creative. They can be a great power for good, or, if misused, a great power for evil.

REFLECTIONS ON THE STEPS

STEPS 4 & 5

We have seen how the first of the Twelve Steps postulates a solid, basic humility, which was balanced in the second by confidence in the Power greater than ourselves, Who could restore us to sanity, which logically led to the third step, of turning our will and our lives over to the direction and management of God. I look upon the roles of the fourth and fifth steps as intensifications of the foundation-virtue of A.A. - humility.

The alcoholic has come to know by hard experience his weakness, frailty and misery; he made the honest admission that he was powerless over his problem and turned completely to God for help and restoration. He has a certain self-knowledge now which will keep him humble in prosperity and also protect him from discouragement in his struggle to regain sobriety. He realizes his limitations, hence he is not surprised if he still feels the attraction of his former ways or even if he falls and returns to alcohol; he is not surprised because he knows he is capable of worse, and he is not discouraged because he is depending on the all-powerful and merciful help of God, who knows our weakness better than we ourselves ever could; instead, with the optimism of a truly humble person, he simply rises again and plods on his difficult way to sobriety, undismayed.

To increase his possession of this valuable virtue of humility, he makes "a searching and fearless moral inventory" of himself. This gives him further knowledge of his weakness and also provides a healthy outlet for his guilt complex, but it likewise offers an optimistic support, because a moral inventory means that he not only lists his failings, miseries, wrongs, but also his good points, his achievements, his virtues. He as it were, takes a look at the road he must cover

6. (virtues to be acquired, wrongs to be righted) and also at the mechanism he has to cover it with (the favourable virtues he possesses and can call his own.)

This inventory is a "searching" one; the alcoholic has a difficult climb to make, so he wants to assess well his credits and debits before he begins to climb: a mistake (deliberative of course, E.G. carelessness) may mean he will later have to cover some ground a second time. He has seen the depths he has descended to and admitted as much, this admission gains him a valuable asset — honesty; hence he wants to make this inventory with no half-truths or excuses; and since he has already admitted his own weaknesses, he makes it fearlessly since no discovery of frailty or even abasement will surprise him — he knows himself too well for that.

When he has completed his moral stock-taking, he can see what he is like, he stands revealed in his true colours, but poor human nature can shut its eyes to this knowledge and endeavour (and alas! succeed too) in ignoring it or disguising it; his next logical step to eliminate this danger is to accept himself as he has revealed himself; he takes another step of honesty and consequently of increase in humility, the foundation virtue of his success at restoration to sobriety. This step is his admission to God and to himself "the exact nature" of his wrongs; and since he has gained a goodly view into the ramification of human nature, he knows he cannot trust himself, and since he cannot see God or hear a reply, he knows he must seek a fellow-creature to whom he can pour out the tale of his woes and hear himself telling another and see that other's reception of the story of his mis-deeds. This is an invaluable exercise in humility and a profitable release from his guilt complex. It will be a hard thing to do but its rewards will far outweigh the weight of the difficulty.

Again, I find I cannot resist quoting Holy

7.

Scripture for these steps in A.A., which only goes to prove the intrinsic worth of the System, and its incomparable utility as a basis for good living, for God revealed His Word in Scripture to us that we may know the road to Him and be directed and supported on that royal way.

The relevant text here is:

"You should get into the habit of admitting your faults to each other, and pray for one another, for the healing of your Souls."

Invercargill

20. 5. 64

Dear Editor,

I have been a member of A.A. Invercargill Central Group since the first week in April, 1963. I am only in my early 30's but I wish I had gone ten years earlier. It took about six months before I realised that I was an Alkie., although I knew drink was a problem long before I went to meetings.

The different stories of members during meetings made my ideas really sit up and take notice. I then realised how lucky I was to have joined the group when I did, as I would have only got worse and worse.

Monty has been and is, a great worker for the group down here, and we have a lot of good members.

Thanking you for a good monthly magazine which I look forward to each month.

BILL B.

SOBRIETY FROM DAY TO DAY,

ANSWERED SO SIMPLY THE "A.A." WAY.

It Brings -- contentment, joy, happiness & true friends, gone, fear, bewilderment & nerve-racking trends

8. FROM OUR READERS.

"I like the Serenity Prayer said out loud by all members, but would prefer opening with the Lord's Prayer and closing with the Serenity Prayer. My reason for this is that it is a thanksgiving to God, as we understand Him. It is on Him that A.A. is founded and progresses. We all in A.A. have to thank Him for our sobriety, not once a week I feel but two or three times a day, for the wonderful way we were seized from insanity or death. Surely it is not too much to ask members to thank Him at the beginning and close of a meeting.
from Bill.Wanaka.

"Mainstay" is of great help to us here and we are all in debt to the printers, article writers and the editor for the time and trouble taken to ensure such a neat and valuable publication. Gordon-Gore.

AA////////AA////////AA

DISCUSSION MEETINGS.

Taking a special subject for discussion has proved a popular variation on the general form of A.A. meeting. Many will remember the bright and interesting discussion on "Sponsorship" at Massey. The Chairman had trouble stopping speakers rushing onto the floor !! Here is a list of subjects that have proved of interest;

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Twelve Steps | Illness in Recovery |
| Anonymity | Do We Recover ? |
| Public Relations | Our Common Welfare |
| Hospitalisation | A.A. & Al-Anon |
| AA in Institutions | Money in A.A. |
| Sponsorship | Relapses(slips) |
| Gossip in A.A. | A.A. & Doctors |
| "Loners" | Twelve Traditions. |

AA *****AA *****AA *****AA

WHO ?

Post a renewal notice in Roxburgh
in May/Road Transport Envelope with 10/-?

9.

M O T I V E S

People come to A.A. for a number of reasons and it is evident that those motives very often provide the answer as to the success or failure of the newcomer's efforts to achieve sobriety.

We have those who approach A.A. initially from motives such as:-

Domestic pressure, financial or occupational difficulties, health problems or fear of the law,

but whilst any reason such as these may later prove of value in establishing contact with A.A., I propose to show that this type of motivation's usefulness is limited and far from sufficient.

Take the domestic pressure angle; Bill has been getting the works at home, hot tongue, cold receptions and the home treatment to such an extent that for the sake of a little peace and quietness he is forced to seek out A.A. to save his reason. Alcoholics' wives, although pretty wonderful people, have a real genius for turning the knife in the wound and Bill is left in little doubt about being lower on the social scale than something that has crawled out of a hollow log. So off Bill goes to A.A. to show his wife that he is entitled to a higher place in the animal kingdom and to restore harmony in the home.

By getting sober and staying that way, he will be successful in his objectives, but the catch is that once his goal is reached, he will come to feel that his family is taking his virtue for granted. His nobility is not being suitably recognised and he may well feel that he is not being suitably rewarded for delivering the goods. Disillusionment, disappointment and discouragement follow and lead to a severe dose of resentment resulting in an unholy binge.

Now for the health motive; Jim has been knocked about pretty badly by the booze. He is

10.

jittery, eats little, sleeps badly and in general is a mass of aches and pains, which are not alleviated by constant hang-overs. He is washed up physically and nervously. His misery persuades him that he had better see what A.A. can do to remedy his condition so he makes an approach. Assuming that he goes dry, he will shortly provide further proof that alcoholics have the constitutions of horses because in quite a brief period he feels on top of the world, as a result of ceasing to poison himself with alcohol, eating good and regular meals and sleeping normally. He feels really good for the first time in perhaps years and the memory of his past suffering tends to fade, the possibility being that he may feel quite justified and competent to renew his friendship for the bottle. The pressure is off, the objective of good health has been attained so whack-ho!

Turning to the financial or occupational difficulty motive. This is both common and very pressing. Financial and occupational insecurity is a very black cloud in an alcoholic's sky. The drive of fear is a most powerful one and possibly produces quite a large proportion of contacts with A.A. If his home life or his bad health has not put a hot enough fire under Bob, his economic danger may very well do so and off he goes to A.A. in real desperation to save his livelihood and in some instances, we suspect, to protect his eventual ability to supply the money for his liquor purchases.

Bob has a strong motive and he may well stop drinking on coming to A.A. He is a good worker as many alcoholics are and in the course of time the heat from his creditors and his boss cools off. He squares up his debts, has money in the Bank and doesn't knock at the knees when he sees the Boss. In fact he is doing a pretty good job all round. Everybody is eating regularly at home, much needed repairs and furnishings are at long last actually accomplished. Bob is

11.

recovering his self respect and confidence and may decide he is a pretty important citizen. His security is established and the motive which brought him to A.A. recedes into the background. Why can't he enjoy himself again? The tragedy is that he so often does.

Now we come to pressure from the Law. Joe and the Law haven't seen eye to eye about some criminal act committed whilst he was under the direction of John Barleycorn. In fact the Police are downright unreasonable about the incident, which was only a boyish prank confined to purchasing large quantities of booze and hiring a fleet of taxis. The fact that the money so used really belonged to someone else is, to Joe's mind, beside the point and a mere detail anyhow. The Police, much to Joe's disgust, insist on holding to old fashioned views in regard to the sanctity of other folks' money and our hero is in a real jam, especially seeing that he has been pretty light-hearted about similar conduct previously.

This time Joe comes before the Court and he is extremely lucky if he can appear before a Magistrate who knows the score about alcoholism and alcoholics. The S.M. in his wisdom, understanding of the disease and kindness of heart decides to give Joe a chance and releases him on probationary terms for a year.

Joe hasn't shown much gumption in the past, but this time the heat is on properly. He has to make the grade and stay out of trouble for a whole year, otherwise the shades of the prison house will close in on poor old Joe. He is open to suggestion at this time and thinks it would be a good idea to follow the Probation Officer's advice to see A.A.

He does so to satisfy the Law that he is being a good boy and observing the terms of his probation and believe it or not, he goes dry. But Joe gets a bit itchy and restless as his

12.

period of legal supervision draws to a close. On that day "his nibs" is freed of restraints and can please himself in lots of things about which he had little or no choice for one whole long year. He can now stay out all night, mix with any sort of companions and above all, renew his vexatiously interrupted devotion to the author of his doom - the bottle.

Joe's motive was satisfied by A.A. keeping him out of bother for a definite and crucial period. Once that was over the motive disappeared and Joe joined the rat-race once again.

Now these fellows I have talked about all had strong motives for approaching A.A., some stronger than others, but none the less important ones in the lives of any normal person, yet they all crashed. Why?

Bill, Jim, Bob and Joe are not normal persons; they are alcoholics and motives that are sufficient for others are not potent enough in their case. They are people in the grip of a compulsive obsession and only the force of the strongest human instinct, that of self preservation provides sufficient motivation to succeed.

It is not sufficient to dry out to satisfy our wives, our creditors, the boss and the Law and recover our health. Those motives will produce just those results and no more and then, as I have shown, only temporarily. No, what is required is our strongest human drive - SELF PRESERVATION.

Unless this is appreciated and understood we will settle for the lesser reasons.

The picture is, however, not as black as I have painted because, fortunately, the less pressing motives have at least exposed these people to A.A. teachings and therapy and the association in Group Meetings develops the feeling in the new man "These are my kind of folks, they understand me, do not condemn, do

13.

not criticise, I feel at home." The desired development of right motivation can and does follow.

A.A. makes no secret of the fact that its appeal is to enlightened self-interest, it is not to appease pressure from others; it is to meet the demand of our own self-preservation. Our plight is so dangerous that nothing short of the application of the motive arising from the strongest force in our being, will answer the case and provide a sound basis for recovery.

In all sincerity, I ask you to re-examine your motives.

LATE HOWARD H. DUNEDIN

ON PAYING A LATE SUB TO 'MAINSTAY'

I fork the sub out with a smile
Seeing it's two years late,
But I swear that neither force nor
guile
Would have got the money, mate,
In the days when I used to vomit bile
And camp in a whisky crate.
Little I knew, that last black mile,
A.A. was the open gate -
I fought it for a little while
But now I love my fate.

JIM B.

DOCTOR: Now Sir, what is the nature of your complaint?

PATIENT: I have been suffering from severe lapses of memory.

DOCTOR: And how long has this been going on?

PATIENT: How long has what been going on Doctor?

SOUTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY - 19th September, CLYDE.

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE.

The first meeting of the 13 Delegates from the 4 Area Assemblies was held at the "Arahina" Conference House at Marton on Saturday, 8th. August, 1964. A.A. was again treading new ground in its acceptance of full responsibility for its activities on a national basis.

This first meeting was held in conjunction with the residential weekend of the Central Area Assembly at their invitation. The A.A.'s present both from the Central Area and beyond it voted unanimously to accept the Conference invitation to attend its meeting as observers rather than have alternative meetings of their own. This was in the best A.A. tradition of all activities being "inclusive and never exclusive".

Delegates present were ;
Northern Area Assembly ; Bill H. (kataia) ; 'Pup' R. (Ak.) ; .WAIKATO/BAY OF PLENTY AREA ASSEMBLY : Doreen (Paeroa) ; Sel. R. (Hamilton) ; Buck. B. (Tauranga). Central Area Assembly ; Dick O'D. (Hawera) ; Jim A. (Napier) ; Ian M. (Wn.) ; Southern Area Assembly ; Bill L-S (Ch.) ; Keith B. (Timaru) ; Jack W. (Otago). Representing 'loners' and unaffiliated groups ; Joan McC. (Taihape).
Sel C. (Ak) sent his apology for his unavoidable absence.

Full minutes will be widely circulated but here are some of the main items dealt with. Ian M was elected chairman for this meeting. He welcomed the delegates and A.A.'s present and assured those who had travelled so far that their effort was greatly appreciated. The Conference specially appreciated the presence of about 50 observers which showed a healthy interest in the future welfare of A.A., and the recovery of many alkies at present unknown. The Steering

God grant me the
Serenity
to accept the things I
cannot change...

Courage to
change the things I can

and Wisdom to
know the difference...

Committee were elected ; Chairman-Sel. C.(Ak.) ; vice-chairman ; Dick O'D (Hawera).; Bill L-S (Ch.) ; Ian M.(sec). BY-LAWS : A simple set of by-laws submitted by Dick O'D were adopted. They amount to a code of action for the Conference and include the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

"MAINSTAY" was adopted as the official voice of A.A. in N.Z. to be produced by the present committee of Doug.Mc. ; Snow. C.; Dick O'D ; Ian M. and the team in Wellington whose work is greatly appreciated.

Following discussion on several re-mits(to which observers contributed) it was decided that the Steering Committee;

- 1.Approach national papers such as "Truth" -"Woman's Weekly" and the "Readers Digest" suggest that the time is ripe for them to do a feature article on A.A. in N.Z. along the lines of the Jack Alexander article in the "Sat.Evening Post" which brought so many to A.A. in the U.S.A. about the equivalent time in A.A.'s development.
- 2.Make contact with the Health Dept. and B.M.A. and discuss problems of hospitalisation and medical treatment of 12th. Step work.The object to be rather sharing of problems than demands.
- 3.Aske Peter G.and Dick O'D to submit an article to the "Law Journal" stating A.A.'s attitude and tradition in regard to use of the A.A. name in Court.

N.Z.Directory of A.A.

Peter G was thanked for his offer to prepare this."Mainstay" would cooperate by including sections in successive issues from September.Some extra postage and costs would be incurred and it was proposed to ask for contributions to cover these.

The next meeting would be at Lincoln College next February in conjunction with a National Assembly.