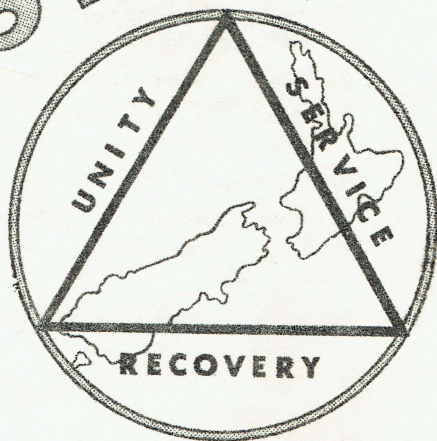


A.A.

is our

MAINSTAY



volume 10 no. 11

APRIL 1965

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 FROM BOX 6458
WELLINGTON.

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.

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 AA book of experience, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, as well as other books and pamphlets, are available through any local group or from the General Service Office, P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York 17, New York.

REFLECTIONS ON KNOCK-na-GREE

Space will not allow me to say all I want to about Knock-na-Gree Camp (this would need a fair sized book). There is a spirit about this annual A.A. function that has to be experienced to be believed. I think there are two reasons for this. One is that there is no business (such as Area Assembly, Inter Group or the like) for this weekend. It is straight AA and wonderful talks from our great friends the doctors of the body, mind and soul, who once again have demonstrated their love for us ex-drunks by coming out, without reward or thought or expectation of reward, to share with us their experience of -and with, the treatment of alcoholism; - their strength their hope and their prayers.

Its not fair to single out any one of them but we have a very sincere "thank you" to say to Mr. Gerry Wall of Blenheim Hospital for flying up (and via Tauranga at that) to give us two inspiring talks.

The other reason why Knock-na-Gree is what it is is the work done so well by Lewis, Des., Olive and Pup who team in so well with the Camp Manager Colin.

As a Catholic member of A.A. the most moving moment of this weekend was the arrival of His Grace Archbishop Liston to say Mass on Sunday morning for about 20 Catholics. That this humble man of God should have come out to celebrate the simple Lenten Mass in the little green Chapel was just one more instance of the amazing things that happen to us in this Fellowship. His sermon I can sum up in a few words: - That we were not to worry so much as to how we could love God more or serve Him better. Rather we could try harder to accept God's love for us. And this love He had demonstrated by giving, or rather

restoring to us the three gifts of Dignity, Humility and courage (His Grace's words-not mine). Twenty little A.A. halos gleamed, momentarily at least, with an incandescence brilliance ! A service was held in the Main Hall for the members of the other branches of the Christian faith. Then His Grace and the Rev. Angus Ross sat down to a very ecumenical breakfast in the dining hall. (A lighter note about this, if Lewis will forgive me for mentioning it. His Grace's Mass was served by an uncle of her's who has seen almost as many summers as the Archbishop himself. At breakfast he confided to Lewis that serving Mass for the Metropolitan of Auckland was the fulfillment of his life's ambition. Lewis replied tartly-"And don't forget if it hadn't been for the family drunk you'd never have made it".).

These reflections should not close without tribute to all the A.A. speakers, and a special one to that memorable talk of Wilbur's.

I was in two minds as to whether I could afford the time to go up to Auckland for this function. I know now that I could never have afforded to miss it.

SCRIBLEX.

OPEN MEETING

Many of the visitors for the week end went on to a combined open meeting of the Eden and Matthews Groups. This was a first class meeting chaired by Sel.C. We are without a full report of the meeting and would welcome some details for our May issue. Group members alternated with visiting speakers and a tribute was paid to Colin B. who put so much effort into the newsheet. A first class sit down supper was provided and enjoyed. Our thanks are added to those expressed there. Ian.

ON BEING A MEMBER

I sat about halfway around the room at the Patients meeting in Hanmer Hospital. I knew a lot about A.A.- I had been around for a few years and had made a lot of effort ; yet I continued to drink again after several fairly long periods of not drinking. I knew the Big Book well - had been group secretary up to the time of my last crash which had been so serious that I was well aware that there was no time for complacency. Obviously I was going wrong somewhere-what was the sticking point ?

The chairman was taking his speakers in a clockwise order and as I listened I was struck by how mixed up all the speakers were. I could shoot their talks full of holes for inconsistencies and rationalisations ; they were sick people all right.

Suddenly I was aware that the person next to me was being asked to speak, and that my turn was coming very soon. What could I say ? How could I even begin ? My mind was full of other people's faults and a complete blank on my own problems. I felt rather panicky : what could I possibly say ? What was that tape I had heard ? Something about being a "member" of A.A. in the same way as your hand is a member of your body. Sick people here getting treatment for alcoholism. How could I begin ?

"My name is Jack and I am an alcoholic." I was here not because I was different from these people but because I had the same sickness as they had. I was sick too. I felt a wordless prayer well up inside me. Some of us would recover : would I be one of those ? I would have a chance, not from the altitude of my knowledge, but from the deep

experience of my own need. I began to see things in a new light.

I was not here to teach but here to learn. Not here to criticize but here to try and be helpful.

It is well, NOW, to remind myself of the spiritual concept in the Foreword of our Big Book:—"We simply wish to be helpful to those who are still afflicted! It was because others put my need before their own that I am sober today.

"Selfishness-self-centredness. That we think, is the root of our troubles"—(Big Book p.62). Selfishness means demands and when we are selfish we can neither give love-nor receive it.

Jack B Christchurch.

FROM THE BOOK "ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS".

"So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot even though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Nor could we reduce our self-centredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.

This is the how and the why of it. First of all we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the arch to freedom. (p.62).

ALCOHOL, ALIBIS and ALATEEN

by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor*

There were eight in one Fiat, and if you counted the guy hanging out the back window, there were nine. They were lucky. The other car had eleven. Twenty teens—short, tall, Protestant, Catholic, most of them good-looking, as most teenagers are—with one big thing in common: an alcoholic parent.

Every Wednesday evening, two abused automobiles carry this group to a church in suburban Washington, D. C., for a meeting of Alateen—a nationwide organization for teen-age children of alcoholics. And every Wednesday the door is closed to adults as these young people work through their mutual problems themselves. "Reverend Phil," as they call Pastor Philip Norris, is available for individual counseling if they need him. So is big Ed, their sponsor, and a man who conquered a drinking problem of his own. He has a big heart, big shoulders to cry on, if necessary, and the group finds him waiting after the meeting is over.

Allowed to sit in on a closed session, this writer found frankness the password. The discussion opened with the question. "Is your unhappiness at home affecting your school work?" Many said yes, but for other than obvious reasons.

"When Dad was drinking last year," said a tall, attractive girl. "my grades went down. I think it was to get back at him for all the trouble he'd made."

A blond fellow swiveled his empty Coke bottle. "My grades went up. I guess I wanted to show my father I was better than he was—a top student while he was only a drunken bum. Now that I see what I'm doing, I'm still getting good grades, but for better reasons."

The talk went on. How much of their difficulties in school could be blamed on worry? How often was this reason an alibi for something else—say, plain old laziness? There was frankness about feelings, too. In a discussion of hatred, the chairman—a sparkle-eyed girl of 17—asked whether the group hated their alcoholic parent or only resented his drinking. It was about fifty-fifty.

"I only resent the drinking," said a young boy. "I mean, when our parents are sober, they're really swell—friendly and all that." A murmur of dissent rose around the long conference table.

"Parents can be monsters even when they're not drunk," said a pretty girl with a pink velvet bow in her hair. "They're sick even when they're sober, remember."

*Reprinted from YOUTH Magazine by permission of the author.

Everyone had something to say:

"I think it's my mother I hated, because she always egged Dad on, was always bugging him."

"I *must* have hated him. If he called me a name, I called him a worse one."

"I can't help but hate Dad when he's drinking. How else am I supposed to feel when we can hardly afford school books, and then he goes and spends five bucks on booze?" The target, however, is not their parents' problems but their own.

"Okay," says the chairman, when a girl has been griping about her mother's slovenly appearance during a drinking bout, "that's her problem. What's yours?" The girl then focuses on her reluctance to ask friends home, and the other Alateens, who have faced the same problem, help her find a workable solution if there is one, give her a chance to vent her anger if there isn't. Respecting their parents' anonymity means withholding personal information about them, giving only their own first names for publication, and posing for photographs only if they cannot be recognized in the picture.

Most meetings, like this one, are discussions of either personal problems or topics suggested in their reading matter. An outside speaker is invited once a month. Sometimes the group holds an open meeting to which friends and families are invited.

There are many things that Alateen is not. It is not a social organization, for nothing should detract from the seriousness of its purpose. Parties are held at other times. Alateen does not promote self-pity. It is not devoted to preventing alcoholism in youth. Nor is it affiliated with any specific religion, though church buildings are often used as meeting places.

God, however, is an integral part of Alateen. Each meeting opens with the Serenity Prayer, "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," and closes with the Lord's Prayer. Alateens believe they must turn over their lives to God, as each individual seeks his own understanding of God.

For most Alateens, their understanding grows as they seek God's guidance. Said a Catholic girl, "I used to try everything to get my Dad to stop drinking. I even tried penance. Once I stayed up all night just walking the floor. I thought God would really be impressed and answer my prayers. But it only gave me sore feet, and I finally realized that this was Dad's problem, not mine, and until he sought help himself, there wasn't any point in my suffering." The group laughed, not in ridicule but in empathy, and the girl laughed with them.

What do Alateens do about their parents? First, they learn all they can about alcoholism—that it is a sickness—an abnormal sensitivity to alcohol plus an emotional compulsion to drink; that to get well, the desire must come from the alcoholic himself, and pleas and scolding only make things worse. Alateens learn that although nothing they have done caused the parent to drink and nothing they can do will make him stop, they can create a more positive climate in the home. They learn to show love and encouragement to both parents, not to take sides in quarrels, to get completely out of his way if the alcoholic becomes violent.

Alateens apply the same 12 steps of recovery to themselves that Alcoholics Anonymous teaches its members. This includes admitting the need for help, strengthening their trust in God, analyzing their own shortcomings and how these may be contributing to family problems, taking direct action to make amends, and helping others with similar difficulties.

What happens to a guy or girl when a home is disrupted by alcohol? For some, the problem is abrupt. "I knew Dad drank a lot," said Susan, "but when the school counselor said my father was an alcoholic, I was shocked. Alcoholics were bums on skid row, not respectable businessmen like Dad."

For others, however, alcoholism was no stranger. Ken, whose parents began drinking when he was four, always thought things were so bad they couldn't be worse. Then he got to high school and discovered they could. Before, he used to spend evenings in the basement, tinkering with an electric motor, escaping the quarreling which drifted down the basement stairs. On weekends, when quarrels became fights, he went to his aunt's. But high school meant dates, friends to bring home, and Ken felt he could never belong. Because he wasn't sure who knew about his parents' problems and who didn't, he automatically assumed that everyone held it against him. If he wasn't invited to a particular eve. he blamed it on his parents and withdrew even more. He wouldn't even go to parties where he was invited, and was desperately unhappy. Then one night the pastor visited the home and suggested Alateen.

It was a surprise from the start. When he blurted out a feeling, 20 heads nodded in understanding. When he told of breaking whiskey bottles in a fit of rage, nobody was surprised. Then he admitted accusing his parents of not loving each other because they wouldn't seek help, he discovered that almost everybody in the group had said the same thing at one time or another—and he felt strangely relieved when they told him he couldn't live his parents' lives for them. Gradually, Ken was able to put into words the desires and hates that had been eating at him for 13 years. Like Ken, Alateens constantly sort out real hurts from imagi-

nary ones, real hindrances from alibis, shortcomings of their parents from their own.

"What do you want me to tell other teenagers about Alateen?" this writer asked at the close of the meeting.

"How grateful we are to have it," said one girl. "I don't know what other kids do who have to face this problem alone. If I didn't have Reverend Phil and Ed and some of the other members to call when things got rough at home, no telling what I might do. Leave, I suppose. Maybe get married. But here I've learned that it's one thing not to let parents' difficulties interfere with plans for your own life, and another thing to jump into something just to get away."

"There are other problems that cause suffering, too," said a husky guy of 16. "I mean, think of kids who have a parent who's mentally ill or addicted to dope or gambling. Why don't they start an organization like ours?"

"Tell them that Alateens are just like everybody else," said the chairman thoughtfully. "We're not destined to become alcoholics just because our parents are."

And though she was right, Alateens are different. Having faced a serious problem much earlier than most young people—having analyzed their own personalities—they have achieved considerable insight, and have laid the foundation for a happier, more productive life.

—PHYLLIS REYNOLDS NAYLOR

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SHOCKED ?

Think for a moment whether you have ever been "shocked" in the colloquial sense of the word. If you have been, it is lack of wisdom for you ought to know more about human nature, including your own. It is lack of humility for you are presupposing that the thing that shocks you is something far below your own moral level.

from "The Divine Pity" Fr. Gerard Vann

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SECURING EVIDENCE.

In Rome's early days men under 30 and women of any age were forbidden to drink. Cato reports that husbands kissed their wives to know if they had been drinking !

"ONE DAY AT A TIME "

To be sober is not difficult, but to be always sober is a gift that reflects the unending perfection of the Eternal.

What consolation can I hold out to myself ? Faced each morning by the idea that this attempt at sobriety must be made every day of my life ; faced in every temptation by the certainty that the attack repelled now will be repeated tomorrow, driven to disheartenment by the conviction that life is not a warfare but a siege, what comfort can I find, what basis of hope against the long dreary stretch of existence ?

I must boldly acknowledge that I have no right to expect any such length of life. Tomorrow may see the end of it all. I have no guarantee of the number of days through which I must struggle in my fight for sobriety. It is therefore, altogether without reason that I promise myself a long struggle. I must also be content to take the life simply of this day. Let the dead past bury its dead ; and let tomorrow take care of itself. Sufficient for the day is its own evil.

Let me resolutely fight the battle that presents itself to me, and leave alone the bogey that my own imagination by itself-assisted by alcohol-has created. Even if I were assured of length of days let me be content to take each day as it comes. Shall I fail tomorrow ? Perhaps. Anyway, let me be certain that I do not fail today. Today God is with me. Will He not who inhabiteth eternity, be with me tomorrow also ?

One day at a time. Patience-persistence. Some of us face a long challenging road back to a life that will prove rewarding and soul satisfying.

(with apologies to "Calix"-Lewis.

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BRING A FRIEND TO TE PUKE 15 MAY 1965

OUR READERS WRITE.

LINCOLN CONFERENCE.

It is expedient that Al-Anon be responsible for the preparation and running of the Conference with the able, willing and active support of A.A. This is real teamwork in operation.

Our Conference is :

A. ACTION. A workshop where closed meetings of all three groups get down to examining and getting the tools(our 12 Steps) in ship shape.

B.BLENDING. Unity at the three group level and with the general public through our Public Meeting.

C.COMPANIONSHIP. Conference shows the family spirit in operation over a long week end. And-as it does work for that period ---well ????????

A wonderful spirit has prevailed over these conferences which have been held for eight years now ; growing stronger as the years roll by.

Don't be under any misapprehension ----we're no angels !!! Perhaps more like Peter Pan ? Cant see anything amiss in that either so long as we follow our "Tinker Bell". Those guiding lights of insight and inspiration that are ever there to guide and bless.

Al-Anon loved your company ; so roll up from the four corners of the country. You'll get a real warm welcome at Massey 5th.& 6th. February 1966. If you want to know how you'll make it-ask Alateen members. They have taught us how to set our sights on a goal, and get there-not "because of" but "in spite of" all other considerations. Oh yes, we have much to share with each other to our mutual advantage. To quote A.A. Milne "This dear octopus-The Family Group".

A.A.; Al-Anon and Alateen--- a big "thank you" for everything-including your alcoholism-look what it gave us! Heather.

OUR READERS WRITE

A MINISTER AT LINCOLN.

"I must say the group who attended the Church service were the most responsive and the most appreciative congregation I have ever preached to. Awareness of need seems to enhance communication and sharpen listening. I considered it a privilege to be able to lead the worship. With warmest regards and my thoughts and prayers,

yours sincerely,

(Rev.) Jock Hosking

Methodist Minister, Springston, Christchurch

INVERCARGILL ASSEMBLY A SUCCESS.

"I would like to say that our Invercargill Assembly was really great. Our Public Meeting was packed out with 250 seats all used. We had good speakers and a very good film ; entitled "For Those Who Drink" by Dr. G. Bell of Canada. The three groups we have here put a lot of work into getting ready for the Assembly and, believe me, we were richly rewarded for our efforts. We had a couple of visitors staying with us, and others for tea and we really enjoyed having them.

I am truly grateful I am in A.A. Life is really great ; I have made so many friends.

I often think of those who have not tried A.A. I wish they would ; if they did they would find life is really worth living. I have only one regret :-that I did not find A.A. earlier. I have been sober now nearly two years ; the most wonderful years in my life.

Bill.R. Invercargill.

ENCOURAGEMENT

"Keep up the good work ; I always look forward to reading "Mainstay" Harold.

MORE FROM OUR READERS.

Vital Point Missed.

The article "Notes on Mental Health" in the March issue made interesting reading. However, it does not mention the vital point, the source of true mental health. The usual forms of mental illhealth are basically ego-centric in nature and produce the well known restlessness and tensions etc., with which we are so familiar. Ego-centricity is a sickness of the soul-man's alienation from God. The restless drives which we have are evidence of our sub-conscious unsatisfied yearning for union with God. In general it can be said that mental health depends on our sound relationship with God. True union with God produces true mental health.

This is the final thought:—"Come to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity". Remember? Or, do we in our pride of intellect so soon forget?

Lynn Gisborne.

HAWERA GROUP : Now meet Tuesday night - same place same time. They hope New Plymouth and Wanganui groups will visit them and propose to do some visiting also. Box 301 Hawera Bert phone 6912.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO "MAINSTAY"

"Mainstay" is typed, duplicated, collated and posted (560 copies) each month by a team of voluntary workers as a service to A.A.'s all over the country. The work is all done in our spare time. We would be greatly helped if the overdue subscriptions (about 40) would either give the time to send their 10/- or let us know that they no longer want "Mainstay"

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.

YOUR A.A. CALLENDER :

15 May 1965 TE PUKE

WAIKATO/BAY OF PLENTY AREA ASSEMBLY
St. John The Baptist Hall
Jocelyn Street.

2 P.M. Area Assembly

3-30 P.M. Combined A.A., Al-Anon &
Alateen meeting

8.P.M. FIRST PUBLIC MEETING IN TE PUKE
Phone contact Doug. 1113Z Te Puke

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29th May, 1965 ASHBURTON

SOUTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY

Phone Contacts Harry 5004; Ken 4638

2 p.m. Repetory Theatre Tancred &
William Streets Ashburton.

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5 June, 1965 PORIRUA

CENTRAL AREA ASSEMBLY.

HOSTS : PORIRUA GROUP

(Details of programme & contacts in next
issue)

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12 June 1965 WHANGAREI

NORTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY

Oddfellows Hall, Norfolk Street.

HOSTS : WHANGAREI GROUP

Phone contacts; Jean 70807; Bill 82442

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7/8 AUGUST 1965 "ARAHINA" MARTON

Central Area Assembly

Annual Residential Weekend.

28 AUGUST 1965 CLYDE CENTRAL OTAGO.
SOUTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY.