

A.A. IS OUR



STAY WITH US

September 1, 1955.

P.O. Box 398, Palmerston North.

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SEARCH AND DISCOVERY. (Part Two)

Yes, the A.A. story certainly offered hope to me; and this hope grew with every week; in the same way as I have seen it grow in many an AA since. The next step for me in recovery was when I made a decision that bound me to A.A. and made it difficult for me to turn back. This situation was thrust upon me rather unexpectedly and called for immediate decision; but I could still have turned back. The film "Problem Drinkers" was due in N.Z. and I enquired from the distributors when it would be released. They replied by asking me if I would come to the preview. I had outlined in my letter my own need for A.A. and my belief that I had found here an answer. It seemed to me that if I went to this preview, I was identifying myself with A.A. and signifying my belief in it. It would be hard to explain any further drinking. "Look out," some inner sense warned me, "you may get yourself in a difficult situation." Thank God, I made that move forward; for from that time I made definite progress and felt relieved from the need to drink. Had I stayed on the sidelines, I would probably have experimented with a good deal more drinking for some time. I believe each of us comes to that point - if we are to make successful application of the A.A. programme - where we make a definite move forward, which places us in a position where we feel we must give the programme a "real go". The preview of the film, the association with the distributors and exhibitors of the film, who showed genuine interest in A.A., did much to fill me with a sense of mission. "Fred" in the film was like a living sponsor to me, and I could scarcely count the number of times I saw that film.

The feeling of being released from the need to drink was a very dramatic experience for me. I had never felt like that before and I knew that it was more than the result of a simple decision on my part. Yes - here was the Power Greater than Ourselves alright; really working inside me. It was easy for me to develop from that point a conception of this Power as the Living Grace of God. The vague idea of "some power" was not sufficient for me. While we AA's are given a very open field in this matter of our conception of the Greater Power, it seems to me that it is necessary to develop a very definite idea about it. You see in Step 3, each of us is going "to turn our will and our lives" over to this power; so we want to know just what we are doing, don't we? Sometimes, I think that many of us are surprisingly vague about this matter, and it may be a block to progress. As I understand our mental processes now, it seems to me that the whole of our life is controlled by our thoughts. If we don't know what we want to do or where we want to go in life, the result is not likely to be what we want. I assume that the case histories that are quoted in the Big Book were written by men and women who had some solid amount of "dry time" behind them. Not one of them had any doubt where they got their power from. Take a look and see.

Next time I'll tell some of the experiences we had in those early days; how I timidly followed those inner nudgings that seemed to be so against the usual practice of life. Many of them worked out very well and I learned how to sort out the ones that did not come from a true source. Remember, I am writing these notes in the hope that some of my experiences may help the newcomers. Look in what there is for things that help you - and discard the rest; they are the musing of just another alky and in no way to be regarded as THE guide to the application of the programme.

I think I have exceeded my space this month; I hear the editors are delighted with the response they are getting to their call for written articles. But the more they get the better the paper will be. And I believe that writing your ideas on A.A. is not only good 12th. step work, but a great help to the writer.

Jan

NORTH SHORE GROUP'S OPEN MEETING. Attended by over 100 people, an open meeting held at Devonport during the third week of August, was addressed by a doctor and two A.A. speakers and films were shown. This meeting was reported in the North Shore Times of the 24th. August.

HAMILTON GROUP'S OPEN MEETING. Last Sunday the 28th. August, 90 people listened to addresses by A.A. speakers in Hamilton. Sel tells us that the speakers were Ian from Wellington, Scotty and Alf from Auckland and Doug from North Shore. This meeting was written up in the Waikato Times of the 29th. August.

WELLINGTON GROUP MEETING. Joy reports from Wellington:- Bob H. said farewell to the Wellington Group a couple of weeks ago, prior to his departure for the U.S.A. A suggestion was made that we hire a tape recorder for the purpose of recording our meeting, after which each member would say a few words to our A.A. friends in America and Bob would take this tape over with him. This idea was enthusiastically received and arrangements for the hire left in the hands of Leslie.

The day of the meeting I happened to meet Leslie worriedly sipping at his coffee in the same restaurant as I. He was flat out trying to fit in various jobs such as a trip to the Reserve Bank for dollars for Grapevine, 12th. stepping and, of course, the all important tape recorder.

The meeting duly assembled and Ian really excelled himself in his opening address - and that's certainly saying something, as we all know. I personally took particular care to articulate clearly, enunciate carefully etc. when repeating the Serenity Prayer, racking my brains to recall all my elocution teacher had tried to drum into my embryo alcoholic head many, many years ago. I had even taken a little extra care when applying my lipstick for the occasion. What effect I hoped this would have on the tape recorder I am not quite sure - must have been a hang-over from the days when I was personally working hard at establishing closer relations with the United States back in 1944.

The meeting was an excellent one, Bob made a very nice au revoir speech and I sat back feeling very proud to be a member of Wellington Group and thinking what a wonderful organisation A.A. is and how close it brings all countries in the world. My power of concentration is still not good and my mind was far away with Bob and his first meeting in the U.S.A. when our tape recording would be played. I came out of my roseate dream with a start. Ian was laughing, Bob was looking slightly bewildered and Leslie's jaw had dropped somewhere below his chest. That's right - we had forgotten to switch on the tape recorder.

There was, of course, general laughter - except from Leslie, who incidentally is our Treasurer. "Humph!! No laughing matter, the cost of hiring that tape recorder is one pound - absolute waste of money and time."

We have promised Bob that we will send a recording over to him of one of our meetings, but so far no-one has had the courage to approach our Treasurer regarding the hire.

PALMERSTON NORTH GROUP MEETING. Last Friday the 27th. August, Ron B. and Phil E. from Wellington and Ian and Scotty on their way North, attended a meeting here. It was a big lift for us youngsters to have such a meeting and after Ron and Phil had headed off back home, we adjourned for a session at the Grand (familiar ground that) and this makes twice we have left there in the wee small hours dry, as we met Justin there some time ago in the room the Duke had.

COMING EVENTS.

WANGANUI. There will be a meeting on Saturday the 10th. September at 8 p.m. in McSkimming's Buildings to mark the formation of a new group. Congratulations, Wanganui, and you will be assured of support from neighbouring A.A.'s.

PALMERSTON NORTH Big Open Meeting proposed for Sunday the 9th. October, sponsored by the Wellington people to help give us a boost along. Final details not yet settled but will be in next issue. Before then phone 6675 will be able to supply particulars.

A TRAVELLING A.A. We were very pleased to have the opportunity of meeting Jim B. We gained some very good ideas and philosophy in an evening's talking with Jim who is doing a tour of the North and looked like having a very busy time in Auckland. We are hoping to see him again on his return.

LAUGHTER AS YOUR MEDICINE.

We were rather intrigued to read the following in this week's Auckland Weekly News:- "Interest has recently been shown in a new group called Cigarettes Anonymous. When you feel you have just got to smoke you call another member and he comes over and gets drunk with you".

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WE HAVE NOTHING TO SELL.

We have all noticed at A.A. meetings a certain number of glum members and hear about others who have been dry quite a long time, going through deep depressions. On the other hand there are members whose faces radiate happiness and serenity. Why! The causes of glum expressions and depressions are too numerous to relate, but we can, at least, profitably dwell for a moment upon some of the matters that create happiness.

First of all, Faith in that Power Greater than Ourselves can take many a burden off our minds. If we do our best with what is placed before us to do day by day, and leave the future in God's hands, we go to bed each night tired and tranquil. Jesus had implicit Faith in a Power greater than Himself and so was able to face the future with equanimity. He had a serenity which He refused to allow others to upset.

Should we not, therefore, strive for a serenity based upon Faith in God as each one of us understands Him, and not rely upon our own uncertain emotions or upon our unstable brethren? To those who find Faith hard to acquire, I would say that it works. It cannot be proved scientifically, but if you act as if you have Faith, it will not be long before you become satisfied that there is some Providence which guides your step. The Psalmist says: "Meditate within your heart upon your bed and be still". You may not get what you ask for, but you will certainly get what you hoped for - humility, wisdom, happiness and sobriety.

Then, as your Faith grows stronger, so does your gratitude. Gratitude for your blessings. Gratitude to A.A. for your sobriety. All of a sudden you realise that all of God's gifts are loaned to us. We cannot keep them unless we give them away. "Love thy neighbour as thyself." This does not mean love thy neighbour more than yourself. It implies an intelligent self-interest. For instance, you cannot give away any more serenity than you have yourself. Therefore, it behoves each one of us not to over-tire ourselves or do other things which raise our tensions and upset our serenity, because, if we do, we cannot pass on any serenity to those who have not yet heard the message. The same thing applies if we divest ourselves of all of our goods or money. In any case, who ever heard of money helping an alcoholic.

The Twelfth Step says: "....we tried to carry this message to Alcoholics". That is all we are called upon to do. We are simply bearers of a message. It is not in our hands as to whether the message is well received or rejected. By trying to carry the message we keep ourselves sober. If we let the result of our efforts affect us then we become over-jubilant and prideful because of those who respond, and over-depressed by reason of rejection. In either event the result is harmful to us and could quite easily start us drinking again.

The programme is a give programme. If we stick to giving, we achieve our object, that is our own sobriety. If we expect no gratitude or reward for our giving, we can never become cynics. On the other hand, if we try to sell the programme, we become possessive of our prospect, try to force the issue, make decisions for him, promise him a good job, a happy home and success. This does us no good, and in the long run must lead us into depressions as rejections of our message will far outnumber the acceptances. All we can offer the alcoholic is contented sobriety and serenity. Therefore, don't sell. Stick to giving. It keeps us humble,

Scotty - Central Group, Auckland.

PRAYER.

Believers admit no limits to what the power of prayer can do, and even skeptics who study the results with an open mind become impressed with the potency of faith. But if his prayers are to be answered, a man has to meet his Maker half way. "The trouble is that most prayers are not honest to God," declares a psychologist, a man of no religious faith. "People have the ungracious audacity to ask for heavenly hand-outs although they are not on speaking terms with their next-door neighbour; they have forbidden relatives their house; they are spreaders of gossip and envious detractors of their best friends. To feel free of bitterness one must be rid of malice, resentment, envy, jealousy and greed, which are certain causes of mental illness and even physical disease. Simply by obeying the scriptural rule to be reconciled to our brother before prayer, we can wash away these breeding germs of neuroses and psychoses. Honest-to-God prayer is a kind of mental health insurance.".... The more we can free our hearts of grudges and enmities, the closer we come to the supreme goal of inner peace. Then we begin to realize that prayer is infinitely more than an appeal for personal favours. It is itself the greatest of all gifts; an ever-richer experience, a continuous feeling of being in harmony with the constructive forces of the universe. It brings the wonders of "visiting with God" to the life of the humblest man of faith. And that sense of divine companionship will powerfully influence his thoughts and actions. Fulton Oursler re-quoted from "Reader's Digest"

A contented mind is the greatest blessing a man can enjoy in the world.

Alcoholics Anonymous 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 an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It 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 achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Programme of Recovery is incorporated in The TWELVE STEPS:-

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

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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.

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