

A.A. is our

MAINSTAY

Stay with us

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The Alcoholic's Partner Says-

As I look at the start of the road back right from the first days - days that I have long ago ceased to think about, and live them again in another's life, I know that we have something to give to the newcomer. Just as with the alkie, so with the co-partner. We can give that understanding that lets them get all that they have bottled up off their chests, and as we listen we can shower them with thoughts of love and understanding, which gets across as nothing else does. I have heard people say, 'I am not suited to doing active work in helping others'. I haven't met any yet about whom I have felt that statement to be really true and I have proved it in my own life, not once but many times. Once I was the shyest person and the very thought of getting up and speaking in public was just one of the 'could nots' in my life. Just as many more were which will crop up as we walk the road back together. But when the need is great enough we find depths in ourselves that we have never sounded and we find that we have things of value to others that we would not ourselves place any value on. But to be of value to anyone they must be used, and from the first time that I got up to speak to a few people, I knew something about myself that I never thought existed. I was needed as a channel to be used in the way that was of most help to those in need. I am the wife of an alcoholic, and as such I have walked the road back with him, and it has been a wonderful road that we have traversed. Not an easy road and it didn't 'just happen', but we had the realisation that there was something worthwhile about it - it was life to everyone connected with it.

When Ian first accepted A.A., he kept it to himself, and I was too busy bringing up the family to ask any questions about it. Ian was always a great talker, but this was different - he didn't talk about it. He didn't share Bobby, his sponsor, with me, and I didn't notice anything strange about that either. But he wrote a lot in those days, and letters came in from New York but nothing was shared by us at this point. I have never stopped to think that one out, but when I hear of co-partners being jealous of A.A. and resenting the time given to A.A. work and pleasure I cannot understand their attitude, as it was never part of my life. Perhaps there was something there in the co-partner's life that shouldn't be in the first place - something that the co-partner had to put right. I feel that there is, for as I have always thought, we come out of the experience of alcoholism with a blurred and lop-sided picture of ourselves and the situation that we have just been rescued from. A.A. was introduced to me in a life lived by Ian. I became interested because of what it was doing for Ian. It had something and I wanted to know what it was. Our life in A.A. was one of steady slow progress all the way. As sponsors we did not have the success stories that others have had, but it was a valuable lesson to us both, we learnt humility in a way that nothing else could teach us. We had a quality in our home which was one for good, felt by those who came under our roof and that knowledge kept us going when we would have turned back thinking that we had failed.

Heather.

She's Not of Us But With Us.

We have received a letter from Muriel over in the Hawkes Bay in which she says 'I am not one of you, but my husband is', and then her letter shows an interest and activity that indicates A.A. to have a place in her life as well as her husband's, albeit because of him. It seems amazing that so many alkyies have the good fortune to be tied in matrimony to women of such calibre - women with love and faith far beyond the bounds of commonsense and reason. It is certainly an occasion for rejoicing and thankfulness when A.A. proves their faith to be sound. In alky fashion I suppose I was taking a lot for granted. My wife had been so much a part of the heartaches and worries of the drinking days that it seemed natural that she should also be there in A.A. activities. I had every right to expect to be told to 'prove the cure' first, but certainly no right to expect my wife's sorely tried patience to prove equal to finding out what I was trying to do and to involving herself wholeheartedly in this new activity. Yet this is so, and with wives of alkyies everywhere seems to be the rule, not the exception. I believe somewhere sometime there must be a special blessing for the alky's wife. Maybe she is not of us, but she is with us.

Doug.

Alanon Family Groups.

Heather writes that she is desirous of starting an Alanon Group in New Zealand and has taken tentative steps to accomplish this. The American 'Saturday Evening Post' of July 2nd. contained an article by Jerome Ellison on these groups. The following are some of Mr. Ellison's impressions after touring some Alanon Groups in the U.S.A.: - "Alanon tackles the problem from the standpoint of the nonalcoholic who is hurt in the emotional and economic tornado which so often accompanies alcoholism. Its members are mostly wives and husbands of A.A. members or prospects. As in A.A. help is given mainly in the form of shared experience. Just as former drinkers are best qualified to appreciate inebriates' problems so the harassments of the alcoholic's spouse - or brother, father, sister, mother, sweetheart, employer or friend - can best be understood, Alanon members say, by a nonalcoholic who has had similar experiences..... In some cases a family member took the first step toward family recovery through Alanon, drawing the alcoholic into the A.A. orbit later. More commonly the alcoholic pioneers in A.A. and the spouse joins Alanon later. ... One factor is curiosity - 'Something had worked a profound change for the better in my husband', one wife testified, 'and I wanted to find out what it was.' Another factor is a constructive kind of rivalry. In my visiting around the groups I heard frequent reference to the growth in understanding and maturity of the alcoholic spouse through A.A. 'We had to find out what it was all about or be hopelessly outdistanced'.... The active therapeutic ingredient of A.A.-Alanon, a mysterious force that AA's are sometimes heard to call 'the programme', is a little hard to define..... I received the impression, however, that it called for a certain minimum of individual effort. A sincere desire to get sober and remain so is expected of the alcoholic; and of the nonalcoholic, a genuine wish to achieve and maintain harmonious family relationships.... Alanon has drawn its strength from a discovery that the affected nonalcoholics have problems distinctly their own - problems which respond amazingly to appropriate application of the familiar ideas which make up the A.A. philosophy.... A.A. as a whole has welcomed its offspring if not always with a wild exuberance, at least with a warm tolerance. An initially suspicious member wrote in the Grapevine "This reporter had heard about these goings on, and like many a smug A.A., assumed they were mere knitting circles. I was lured into one of their meetings recently. If I came to sneer, I remained to pray. This was no sewing bee, but a spiritual force at work. I guess I was expecting to hear long complaints about how they'd been put upon by our boozing. There was none of that. They were examining not us but themselves."

A spiritual person is one who DOES what he has to do - when he has to do it - in the best way he can - KNOWING that he gets his guidance, strength and success from God through humble prayer and meditation.

Mainstay.

The interest in "Mainstay" has grown beyond our earlier imagination, and we have been asked so often how we decided on the name which shows out the most important letter in the alphabet. We had thought of Alkys Ahoy and Mainbrace but the splicing of the latter had the strong aroma of overproof rum, so that was out. 'All for Alkys' was another suggestion but in view of our past experience as alcoholics we reasoned we had had all of too much for too long, and we wanted to get away from past selfishness. We wanted a name which would be fitting for our cause, ourselves and our wives also. The name 'Mainstay' was suggested by Jack's wife and was readily accepted. 'Mainstay' has as its original purpose the carrying of the message to alcoholics, but it is also intended for reading by our wives, who are a strong strand in our stay of sobriety. If we look at the diagram of a full rigged ship we will see the important function of the mainstay. If the mainstay slackens and the strands begin to carry away, the ship's rigging weakens, one mast carries away another and all the top-hamper comes crashing to the deck in an awful tangle thereby holing the driest of decks and rendering the ship unmanageable. On glancing at the heading of 'Mainstay' just now, I can see a great significance in it that I had not noticed so plainly before. Underneath the heading 'Mainstay' are three words, "Stay with us"....

Don.

Wanganui held its first group meeting on Saturday night 10th. September, at which were members from Wellington, Lower Hutt, New Plymouth and Palmerston North. Father Cook, Mr. Hieford, the Probation Officer and his assistant, Mr. Robertson were guests for the evening. George S., the founder of the group, was in the chair and he gave us a warm welcome in his opening address. Ian was the first guest speaker and he gave the meeting the evergreen story of how Alcoholics Anonymous first came into being, and of how the two founders Bill and Dr. Bob met with much disappointment in the slow progress of their undertaking and of how it eventually blossomed into the world wide organisation it is to-day. Ian told us of his own early experience as a Loner and of regaining the love and confidence of his family. George B. of Lower Hutt told us of his early struggle to earn sufficient money to fritter away into the jingle boxes of ale houses from 'Frisco to Melbourne and ports in between, and also of his earlier struggle to convince himself he was an alcoholic, a convincing which almost ended in disaster. George, speaking on the lighter side, made a point of interest when he said how pleasureable it was to come to Wanganui on such a memorable occasion. He and seven others had come up earlier in the day by parlour coach and had made a picnic day of it. Wanganui had turned on beautiful weather, the Wanganui Jockey Club had decided to honour them by putting on a race meeting, it's wonderful how AA works. George went on to say how free they felt in one another's company without fear of being held by the coat-tails when approaching the danger zone under the Stand. However, George omitted to tell us they had engaged a non-drinking non-AA driver. These boys and girls were certainly playing safe. Father Cook thanked the group for inviting him and said he was amazed at the wonderful growth of A.A. which has built itself to such great heights mainly through the mutual help from one another. He advised the meeting to hold on to and cherish that which they had. The meeting steadied down while transport was arranged and we adjourned to George's home where Myrtle had a wonderful supper set out and ably assisted by Joan we very soon began to enjoy the appetising supper presentation. As some of us had a hundred miles to travel, we took our departure from a happy home and in setting off through the streets of Wanganui there seemed to be something brighter and different about that city that we had not noticed before.

Don.

Palmerston North will be holding its first open to the public meeting on Sunday afternoon the 9th. October at 2.30 p.m. in the CONCERT CHAMBER of the Opera House. The Magistrate, Mr. Inglis, will be the Chairman and the Mayor has advised us with regret that a prior arrangement will have him out of town at that time. We have arranged for the film 'Problem Drinkers' and several AA speakers. George has already written to us with the information that there will be nearly half a hundred weight of moral support from Lower Hutt and Wellington.

We wish to express our good wishes for the newly formed South Dunedin group, and to say 'Thank you' for the appreciation of 'Mainstay'.

Dr. M. in Australia writes - "Am glad to get the 'Mainstay' - an excellent publication and one that is sure to further the interest of A.A. in N.Z. A.A. in Australia flourishes - over 60 branches in N.S.W. - 20 in the country. I get very little time these days but go to other States on holidays to do AA work. All good wishes and congratulations on your journal. S.J.

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 to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in

The Twelve Steps

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol . . . that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step Seven: Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Step Eleven: 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.

Step Twelve: 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 A.A. 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