

THE NIGHT CAP

Published monthly by the San Antonio
Central Service Office of Alcoholics
Anonymous in the interest of greater
unity of members in local and South-
west Area groups.

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Number Ten

WHEN FRIENDS OR PATIENTS ASK ABOUT ...

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Most doctors have heard of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Most doctors, including us alcoholics, do not know where it is, what it does, and how it works. We all know that alcoholism is a tough behavioral disease. We do not know how to cope with it in our friends, our patients (or in ourselves), and we don't often try. Look at it this way, AA is the nation's best specialist in alcoholism and, as with other problems beyond our competence, we should refer our case to the specialists. But don't do it blindly. Learn about your specialist, his methods, and his competence so you can discuss referral intelligently.

IT WORKS

Alcoholics Anonymous was begun in 1935 by two hard-core alcoholics, one of them a doctor. Today there are more than a million members organized into more than 27,000 groups that meet weekly or more often. The numbers are not accurate because of AA's unstructured organization and its anonymity. The success rate in keeping alcoholics away from alcohol is high. Of those members sober less than a year, 35% will not drink. Of those sober one to five years, about 80% will not drink and will remain in AA. The cure rate is zero. Alcoholism is a permanent disability; alcoholics are either wet or dry. One would imagine that a method with such great success in such a tough disease would be closely tied in to the medical profession. But AA remains staunchly unaffiliated - unaffiliated with medicine, religion, politics, lay foundations, or governmental sponsors. Testimony concerning the effectiveness of AA comes not only from its members, but also from outside sources. In 1951, AA was given the prestigious Lasker award for outstanding service.

HOW IT WORKS

The fundamentals of AA boil down to self-honesty and a willingness to help others. Alcoholics Anonymous puts it to us bluntly that we cannot do it alone, and we need outside support. The "higher power" that AA invokes may be God to some. To others, it may be the AA organization. Whatever it is, it provides emotional support for people with a disease that is emotionally destructive. With such quasi-religious overtones, it is not surprising that AA meetings have some of the form, if little of the substance, of church services. The meetings begin with a reading of "scripture" and end with a prayer. Laughter, jokes, jovial insults, and unlearned discourse provide the usual atmosphere. Content varies from group to group. There are large open meetings that non-members can attend. There are closed round-table discussions with a leader who announces a topic, and then

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WHEN "THEY" ASK (Continued from Page One)

everyone pipes up. The opening reading, the "scripture", is a statement entitled "How It Works". It is from Chapter 5 of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous". It describes in broadest terms the circumstance that brings an alcoholic into AA: "Our lives had become unmanageable". Nothing is said about illness or the shakes or rate of alcohol consumption to define alcoholism. Then comes the bit about absolute honesty and the desire to remain sober. There is more, but this gives you an idea of how it works.

Alcoholics Anonymous works one day at a time. One of the jokes we repeat is that when you join AA you don't have to quit drinking. You just stay sober one day at a time. You make it from one midnight to the next. When we cut the future down to 24 hours, it is easier to cope with than forever.

SPONSORS

Almost every member is sponsored by someone who knows the ropes. The sponsor takes the new member to meeting after meeting after meeting. "Ninety meetings in 90 days" sets a humorously impossible standard for any new member. It may be a joke, but it does reflect two facts of life: (1) that the early exposure to AA should be intense and repetitive and (2) that the first 90 days are critical. Coming dry through the first 90 days in most groups calls for a small celebration.

NEW MEMBERS

To get to that first meeting has required a grim decision. Behind it lie years of illness, injury to others, anger and fright, and finally a decision. Let's say you are finally frightened of losing your job, your health, your family, your sanity, your life, and you say, "OK, I'll go". That decision is made. At the first meeting, one more tough decision is coming up. Before the call to order, you are introduced by your sponsor. "This is George, a new member". "Hi, George". (That's the AA salutation, Hi). It's a small meeting, 10 or 20 men and women around the table. The chairperson calls to order and introduces him or herself. "My name is Bill. I'm an alcoholic." "Hi, Bill." The introduction moves around the table. "My name is Carol. I'm an alcoholic." "Hi, Carol." The turn comes to another new member. "My name is Lester ... I'm just a ... dirty ... rotten ... bum." Doesn't look dirty; shakey maybe, like you. Can't bring himself to say it. The turn moves along - and here you are: "My name is ..." Its finally come, the day when you say it right out loud - what you and your friends and your patients have known for years. If you can't say it tonight, you will tomorrow or the meeting after that. And, what a relief!

You will soon begin to feel better. The terror of a life become unmanageable may begin to dim; self respect may reassert itself. Hang on. "One day at a time." Remember the parties you couldn't remember leaving. Hang on. Soon will come the great realization that you'll never have to take another drink as long as you live.

HITTING BOTTOM

Alcoholics Anonymous exists because alcoholics need help. It succeeds because it provides help in a way that matches the problem. It requires honesty, and there's the rub. The wet alcoholic needs help, but he hopes that he doesn't.

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WHEN "THEY" ASK (Continued from Page Two)

"I'm no alcoholic." "I can quit anytime." "It's just to help me over the rough time." "If people would quit bugging me ..." " ... helps me sleep."

My own drinking career divides itself into three phases. As a young man, I was proud of my hollow leg. In the middle years, I wasn't drinking for fun anymore, but my attitude was a cynical "O God, make me pure, but not yet." "Then, at last, I was in trouble.

The first step to sobriety is an admission that one is powerless over alcohol. Pride, shame, fear, selfishness, addiction, a whole constellation of psychological weapons help to fight off the honest recognition that we need help. Alcoholics Anonymous cannot help until the alcoholic sees that he needs help and says that he needs help and knows that he means it. Going to AA "to get the bastards off my back" cannot turn the trick. When the alcoholic's pride finally dissolves in the dreadful recognition that he does need help, then he is ready. He has "hit bottom".

Bottom is at a different level for different folks. For some, bottom is reached only after a second or third time in the hospital or jail. Some don't get that far. My own hitting bottom occurred the morning that I was unable to perform a public professional commitment. I wasn't drunk; I wasn't even badly hung-over. But I was so mentally and chemically disordered that I couldn't put it together. I stood up and said, "I am ill." That night, at my first AA meeting, I blurted it out, "I'm an alcoholic." It hurt. So does the opening of an abscess.

HOW ANONYMOUS IS AA?

Alcoholics Anonymous has the same ethics of confidentiality as the medical profession and the clergy. Many members are proud to tell you that they don't give a damn about their own anonymity. But we all have a point of honor to protect everyone else's. Actually it's impossible for a dedicated and practicing alcoholic to embark on total sobriety without someone's noticing. But no one in AA is going to help you advertise your good fortune or ask for a testimonial.

The anonymity of AA is applied with especial rigor to publicity. Alcoholics Anonymous endorses no one and affiliates with no organization. No member speaks by name for the organization. No member writes about AA except anonymously. I write these paragraphs as George O. for that reason.

REFERRING YOUR PATIENTS

Most alcoholics never get the chance to make that awful assertion. Alcoholics Anonymous is said to concentrate on the white middle class. The wealthy go to psychiatrists (who sometimes belong to AA); the poor go to jail. Neither institution comes close to AA in the ability to keep the alcoholic dry. Alcoholics Anonymous is here for anyone who wants it. It exists of, by, and for. It requires no dues, no affiliation. Anyone can organize a group - rich, poor, black, white, in the United States or abroad.

How can you refer your patient? In many cities, AA is in the phone book. Or ask clergymen, social workers, the police, the county medical society, or Alanon an organization that helps the families of alcoholics. Or ask a friend or a patient who used to be a problem drinker and kicked it. Chances are, he'll know.

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WHEN "THEY" ASK (Continued from Page Three)

Remember AA isn't only for the ruined. It's for anyone who decides that he needs it. There's another threadbare joke that goes the rounds in AA. Two men who haven't met for years recognize one another at the funeral of a friend. "Tell me," asks one, "what did George die of?" "To be blunt, he died of alcoholism." "Did he try AA?" No! He was never that bad."

- George O., MD -

(Reprinted from the July, 1978 edition of SUN DRY, published by the El Paso Intergroup Office).

AROUND THE AREA:PARK NORTH GROUP CELEBRATES 2ND ANNIVERSARY

In February 1977, Jack and Dee S. were asked by Dr. Joe Berry, of Park North General Hospital, to start an AA group at the hospital, mainly to introduce the Alcoholics Anonymous Program to alcoholic patients while still hospitalized. The first meeting was held on Friday, February 18, 1977, with just a handful of people in attendance. The First Anniversary Party held in February 1978 was a huge success with approximately 60 people showing up; there was "standing room" only! Since then, this small Friday night discussion group has become so large that in December 1978 another meeting, held on Wednesday nights, was formed.

So, in less than 2 years, with only 4 to 6 people attending the first meeting, this open discussion group has grown by leaps and bounds! This is a prime example of how AA grows if we are only willing to put forth a little time and effort.

The Park North Group will celebrate its Second Anniversary on Friday, February 16, at the Professional Building located in front of the hospital, 4302 Vance Jackson, at 7:30 p.m. Pat C. will chair the meeting and Jack S. will be the speaker. Come on out for an evening of fun, fellowship, food, and most of all, some good ole' AA!

Dee S.

PLEASANTON'S 24TH ANNIVERSARY

The Pleasanton Group will celebrate 24 years of "Country Style AA", February 24 at 8 p.m. in the Pleasanton High School Cafeteria. Plenty of good "down home" fellowship - plus free coffee and doughnuts to follow the meeting which features Gene M - C, Duncan, Oklahoma attorney, as the principal speaker.

You won't want to miss this warm and wonderful evening!

* * * *

NEW MEETINGS:

Two new meetings have been added to the San Antonio schedule. The Goliad Group has added a candlelight meeting at 10 p.m. on Saturday evening.

The Fellowship Group holds Open Discussion Meetings on Tuesday evenings at 8:15 p.m., 1602 Dakota. For more information, call Charles (533-9812).

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NEW MEETINGS: (Continued from Page Four)

Remember new meetings are like new babies - they need a lot of support! Drop in and meet some new friends ... hear some new ideas ... smile a brand new smile!

REGULAR MONTHLY EVENTS:

There will be no meeting of the Administrative Board of the Central Service Office during the month of February.

The CSOC and District 1 Meetings will be held on Sunday, February 11th at 7 p.m. in Club 12, 102 Thames Blvd.

The Goliad Group, 537 Avondale, will hold its regular monthly barbeque, Sunday, February 18th at 6 p.m. followed by an Open Speakers' Meeting at 7:30 p.m. All other Sunday Meetings are held at the usual time of 8:15 p.m.

Group 12 will hold its monthly dinner and games night on Saturday, February 24th at 7 p.m. in Club 12.

The Frontier Group will sponsor its monthly dance Saturday, February 24th following the Open Speakers' Meeting 8:15 p.m. at the ARC, Southton Road.

The 24 Hour Service Group, 1203 Fredericksburg Road will hold its regular monthly dinner on Sunday, February 25th at 1 p.m.

IN MEMORIAM:

Jess McNeil, San Antonio, January, 1979.

Ross Young, San Antonio, January, 1979.

L. L. Helgerson, San Antonio and Las Vegas, Nevada, January, 1979.

The Central Service Office would like to thank all those who have made memorial donations. These gifts are deeply appreciated and will enable AA to further carry the message.

TO THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, WE EXTEND SINCERE SYMPATHY AND OUR PRAYERS THAT THEIR BEREAVEMENT MAY BE TEMPERED BY REFLECTIVE THOUGHT UPON THE HAPPINESS
+ + + + SHARED + + + +

STAT'S: 12/20/78 - 1/22/79

AA - 163 Student - 3

Alanon - 31 PIC - 5

Information - 136

PIC: 12/20/78 - 1/20/79

Norma W. and Karen K. were the guests of Samuel Clemens High School for a 3 hour presentation.

Nancy W. and Carl C. Participated in an interview which was aired on KMOL TV (Channel 4).

DCM WORKSHOP:

A DCM Workshop will be held February 3 and 4 at the Sheraton Motor Hotel. Reservations a must! For more information, contact your DCM. Everyone interested is invited to attend.

HOSPITAL ZONE:

The Groups responsible for taking meetings to the Villa Rosa Group's Tuesday evening Open Speakers' Meetings for the month of February are:

February 6 & 20 - The Haven

February 13 & 27 - The North San Pedro Group

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First main paragraph of text, starting with a capital letter, containing several lines of faintly visible words.

Second main paragraph of text, continuing the narrative or report, with some lines appearing more distinct than others.

Third main paragraph of text, possibly containing a list or a series of points, though the text is too faint to read clearly.

Fourth main paragraph of text, showing a continuation of the document's content.

Fifth main paragraph of text, with some words appearing slightly larger or bolder than the surrounding text.

Sixth main paragraph of text, continuing the flow of information.

Seventh main paragraph of text, possibly a concluding sentence or a transition to the next section.

Eighth main paragraph of text, with some lines appearing more prominent.

Ninth main paragraph of text at the bottom of the page, possibly including a signature or a final note.

HOSPITAL ZONE: (Cont'd. from Page Five)

The Sally Group's Wednesday evening Open Speakers' Meetings will function on a voluntary basis during the month of February.

The VA Hospital Group holds Beginners Discussion Meetings every Thursday evening at 8:15 p.m. in Room E-136, Audie Murphey VA Hospital.

The group cordially invites all area AA's to lend their support by adding their presence - bring a big dose of sobriety and serenity to share with patients who are taking their first step along the road to recovery!

The Park North Group holds Open Discussion Meetings on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8 p.m. in the basement cafeteria of Park North General Hospital 4330 Vance Jackson Road.

HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

The Central Service Office is compiling a list of persons interested in working with patients in local hospitals and detox facilities.

Members may lead Beginners Meetings, make 12 Step calls or temporarily serve as sponsors for patients who are leaving hospitals and halfway houses.

You could be that very important 1st Contact! Call: 226-2523 for more information.

THE GREAT A.A. ADVENTURE
(quote from AS BILL SEES IT)

" Dr. Bob was my constant companion and partner in the great A.A. adventure. As the physician and great human being that he was, he chose work with others as his prime A.A. vocation and achieved a record which, in quantity and in quality, none will ever surpass.

" In all the stress and strain A.A.'s pioneering time, no hard word ever passed between us. For this, I can thankfully say that the credit was all his."

+++++

I took my leave of Dr. Bob, knowing that he was to undergo a serious operation. The old, broad smile was on his face as he said almost jokingly, "Remember, Bill, let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple!" I turned away, unable to say a word. That was the last time I ever saw him.

A.A.- I2-I2-I2-I2-I2-I2-I2-I2-I2- A.A.

BUCK-A-MONTH CONTRIBUTION FORM
DETACH AND MAIL

Central Service Office-I09 Lexington Ave., Suite 215, San Antonio, Tx. 78205
Please enter my contribution to the BUCK-A-MONTH for _____ months.
Donation is enclosed on the basis of \$1.00 per month.

NAME _____ STREET _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

- FINANCIAL CENTER
 SAN ANTONIO
 CENTRAL SERVICE OFFICE
 RECEIVED DEC. 19, 1978

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>JAN.</u>	<u>TO DATE</u>	<u>GROUP</u>	<u>JAN.</u>	<u>TO DATE</u>
Alamo Heights	15.00	15.00	Open Door	0	0
Audubon	10.00	10.00	Park North	20.00	20.00
Broadway	0	0	Reality	0	0
Callaghan	0	0	Reliance	0	0
Downtown	60.00	60.00	SASH	0	0
Fellowship	0	0	Santa Fe	0	0
First Step	0	0	Sahara	0	0
Ft. San Houston	20.00	20.00	Serenity	15.00	15.00
Frontier	0	0	Sharing	0	0
Goliad	0	0	Spiritual Life	0	0
Group 12	75.00	75.00	Southwest Loop	5.00	5.00
Grupo Del Sol	0	0	Stepping Stones	0	0
Grupo Unidad	0	0	Sunset	15.00	15.00
Highlands	20.00	20.00	The Haven	0	0
Hope	0	0	Triangle	0	0
Kingsboro	0	0	24 Hour	0	0
Laurel Heights	0	0	Universal City	0	0
Marymont	0	0	VA Hospital	20.00	20.00
Northeast	20.00	20.00	Valley Hi	0	0
N. San Pedro	40.00	40.00	Villa Rosa	25.00	25.00
Northwest	20.00	20.00	Wesley	0	0
Northwood	0	0	Windcrest	15.00	15.00
			Young People	40.00	40.00

18 Groups.....\$430.00
 BUCK-A-MONTH.....\$330.10

AREA

Bandera	0	0	Women's Serenity	0	0
Bridge (H.B.)	0	0	Lytle	0	0
Canyon Lake	0	0	New Braunfels	0	0
Floresville	10.00	10.00	Pearsall	0	0
Fredericksburg	0	0	Pleasanton	0	0
Hill Country Grp.	0	0	Seguin	0	0
Kerrville	0	0			

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS
 Horwood Group for Bob Lee
 Van for Harry May, James Calamon &
 Scott Turner
 Ted & Gin Rose for U.H. Richie
 Judy A. for Ross Young

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS
 Katie & Forrest J.
 Mike D.
 Jim B.
