

# About AA

## The A.A. Grapevine: A Meeting in Print

BOX 1980

Getting Younger in AA  
—One Day at a Time

AA Grapevine



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 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.

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### Magazine Mirrors A.A. in Action

Like the primary purpose of the Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship it serves, the principal aim of the A.A. Grapevine magazine is to share the experience, strength and hope of sober alcoholics and extend the hand of A.A. to the still-suffering alcoholic. First published in June of 1944, and published every month since, each issue is designed to help recovering alcoholics share their experience in sober living. Written and illustrated by A.A. members from around the world, Grapevine stories explore how they use A.A. to cope with problems of depression, anger, resentment, pride, and other stresses of daily life.

Through the pages of the Grapevine, A.A. members, prospective A.A. members, and those professionals interested in A.A. can gain a wide-angled view of the Fellowship and, through the eyes of individual members, glimpse some of the concerns presently facing Alcoholics Anonymous. Many readers have found it a lifeline in bridging the difficult gap between the treatment center or correctional facility and the A.A. program. For A.A. Loners around the world; for those who are homebound, disabled, or incarcerated; or for those who have no access to an A.A. group, it can serve as a means of spiritual and emotional sustenance. As one member writes, "After periodic relapses in A.A., I decided to leave A.A. for good. Despite making four or five meetings a week, I could not stay sober. But my Grapevine subscription continued to arrive monthly and I would read it cover-to-cover as soon as it came, and I would cry and cry, wanting to return to A.A., missing the Fellowship, but my pride preventing me from surrendering. For four months the Grapevine kept that little flame alive in me through my self-imposed isolation and finally led me back to the Fellowship."

Widely known as "a meeting in print," each issue starts—as do most A.A. meetings—with what is known as the A.A. Preamble (shown at left). Written by the Grapevine's first editor, the Preamble was originally published in a 1947 issue of the magazine in an effort to respond to the growing number of interested nonalcoholics who wanted to know just what the fledgling Fellowship was all about.

Bill W., co-founder of A.A. and a frequent contributor to the Grapevine, saw the magazine from the very start as "the monthly mirror of A.A. in action—always the same in principle, yet ever growing and ever finding better ways of doing and thinking on new fronts."

## A Friendly Messenger

Currently at a circulation level of more than 133,000 copies a month, with copies being sent to more than 80 countries worldwide, the Grapevine reaches an A.A. population today which is dramatically different from the A.A. population of the early 1940s. Today, the Fellowship is made up of many more young people, people in their early teens and twenties; the number of women has increased dramatically to nearly 35% of the total A.A. population; the percentage of members who have experienced drug addiction in addition to their alcoholism has increased steadily over the years, reaching the level of nearly 42%; many minority groups and language groups are represented throughout A.A.; and the number of newcomers reaching A.A. through rehabs and counseling has surpassed the number who reach the program through an individual A.A. member. All of this points to the ongoing need for increased communication, and in the pages of the Grapevine many A.A. members and interested professionals find just such a friendly messenger of A.A. thought and action.

Guided by the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the magazine has flourished as the voice of the A.A. Fellowship. From its inception, there has been a running commentary—a commentary that flares up, dies out, and flares up again—about the importance of A.A.'s oldtimers, or A.A.'s newcomers, or about profanity and smoking at meetings, or about the controversy between A.A.s who believe in "the God stuff" and those who don't. In an effort to come to grips with many of these ongoing questions, individuals have been sharing their experience, strength and hope, and the Grapevine has been publishing it. The awareness that every A.A. member has an individual way of working the program permeates the pages of the Grapevine, and from month to month (and often within the same issue), articles are published that appear to contradict each other.

Grounded firmly in the Tradition of personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and film, A.A. members sign their articles with characteristic simplicity, for example: "John S., Billings, Montana," or "P.Q., Alberta," or just "Anonymous, U.S.A." And, as far as money is concerned, the Grapevine accepts no advertisements and addresses no political or controversial topics in the world at large. Instead, the magazine is guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion, and derives its financial support strictly from subscription sales and the sale of other items which are direct spin-offs from the magazine.

## A Learning Experience . . .

For professionals who endeavor to help alcoholics, it is often not easy to grasp the concepts and purposes of Alcoholics Anonymous without reading its literature, much of which, like the Preamble, originated in the Grapevine. Articles first published in the magazine have been developed into pamphlets published by A.A. World Services, Inc., the other publishing arm of the A.A. Fellowship. Many of the personal stories in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, first appeared in the

Grapevine. And its pages have carried articles by such nonalcoholic figures as Dr. Harry Tiebout, the Rev. Sam Shoemaker and Bernard Smith—not to mention the correspondence between Carl Jung and Bill W., which the Grapevine has printed four times, beginning in 1963.

Noting how important a sense of history is to any organization, as the result of a suggestion from A.A.'s annual General Service Conference, the Grapevine recently instituted a section of material highlighting A.A. history entitled "What We Were Like." Some of the topics covered have been: a history of young people's groups; a talk given by Henrietta Seiberling, the nonalcoholic who brought A.A.'s co-founders together for the first time; information on the formation and development of A.A. in Canada and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and a comparison of A.A. and the Washingtonians—a short-lived but highly effective temperance movement of the 1840s.

Over the years, in response to reader requests, the Grapevine has also printed excerpts from already published articles about alcoholism. This section, "About Alcoholism," is printed on gray pages to distinguish it from A.A. material.

Many items published in this section are contrary to A.A. philosophy; a "disclaimer" at the top states that they are there purely for information and do not imply endorsement or approval by A.A. or the Grapevine.

## 'An Unexpected Dividend'

For professionals who treat or counsel alcoholics but don't have the time to go to open A.A. meetings, the Grapevine can and does serve as an effective source of information about Alcoholics Anonymous. As one counselor puts it, "Reading the Grapevine enables me to participate vicariously in the A.A. experience. As a result, I am better able to help my clients."

Another counselor says: "By exposing myself to the stories of well alcoholics—knowing what it was like, what happened, and what it is like with them now—I am far more understanding and knowledgeable when it comes to providing guidance."

Because every issue of the Grapevine includes the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Serenity Prayer, Preamble, and Responsibility Declaration, the professional gains a clearer picture of the A.A. program in action. An unexpected dividend for one physician has been "the ability to get in touch with my feelings about alcoholics and also to stimulate my personal growth as a human being. I've discovered that there is a lot to be gained by trying to incorporate the Twelve Steps of A.A. into my own life. Recently, I've realized that by reading the stories of alcoholics who have literally gotten their lives back in A.A., I have been able to make contact with my spiritual self."

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For more information, please contact the Grapevine directly: The A.A. Grapevine, P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-1980.

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