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CENTRAL OFFICE NOTES: A Date With Destiny?

Somebody once said, "As much as you may grow, as many recoveries as there may be, I think the eventual by-products of A.A. will be greater than A.A. itself."

Everywhere now, we hear such remarks. They come from all kinds of people. Doctors think of applying our methods to other neurotics; clergymen wonder if our humble example may not vitalize their congregations; businessmen find we make good personnel managers - they glimpse a new industrial democracy; educators see power in our non-controversial way of presenting the truth; and our friends wistfully say, "We wish we were alcoholics - we need A.A. too."

Why these stirrings? They must all mean, I am sure, that we have suddenly become much more than recovered alcoholics, A.A. members only. Society has begun to hope that we are going to utilize, in every walk of life, that miraculous experience of our returning, almost overnight, from the fearsome land of Nowhere.

Yes, we are again citizens of the world. It is a distraught world, very tired, very uncertain. It has worshipped its own self-sufficiency - and that has failed. We A.A.s are a people who once did that very thing. That philosophy failed us, too. So perhaps, here and there, our example of recovery can help. As individuals, we have a responsibility, maybe a *double responsibility*. It may be that we have a date with destiny.

An example: Not long ago Dr. E.M. Jellinek, of Yale University, came to us. He said, "Yale, as you know, is sponsoring a program of public education on alcoholism, entirely non-controversial in character. We need the cooperation of many AAs. To proceed on any educational project concerning alcoholism without the goodwill, experience and help of A.A. members would be unthinkable."

So, when the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism was formed, an A.A. member was made its executive director: Marty M., one of our oldest and finest. In this issue, she tells *The Grapevine* of her work. As a member of A.A., she is just as much interested in us as before - A.A. is still her avocation. But as an officer of the Yale-sponsored National Committee, she is also interested in educating the general public on alcoholism. Her A.A. training has wonderfully fitted her for this post in a different field. Public education on alcoholism is to be her vocation.

Could an A.A. do such a job? At first, Marty herself wondered. She asked her A.A. friends, "Will I be regarded as a professional?" Her friends replied, "Had you come to us, Marty, proposing to be a therapist, to sell straight A.A. to alcoholics at so much a customer, we should certainly have branded that as professionalism. So would everybody else.

"But the Nation Committee for Education on Alcoholism is quite another matter. You will be taking your natural abilities and A.A. experience into a very different field. We don't see how that can affect your amateur status with us. Suppose you were to become a social worker, a personnel officer, the manager of a state farm for alcoholics, or even a minister of the Gospel? Who could possibly say those activities would make you a professional A.A? No one, of course."

They went on, "Yet we do hope that A.A. as a whole will never deviate from its sole purpose of helping other alcoholics. As an organization, we should express no opinion save on the recovery of problem drinkers. That very sound national policy has kept us out of much useless trouble already, and will surely forestall untold complications in the future.

"Though A.A. as a whole," they continued, "should never have but one objective, we believe just as strongly that for the *individual there should be no limitations whatever, except his own conscience*. He should have the complete right to choose his own opinions and outside activities. If these are good, A.A.s everywhere will approve. Just so, Marty, do we think it will be in your case. While Yale is your actual sponsor, we feel sure that you are going to have the warm personal support of thousands of A.A.s

wherever you go. We shall all be thinking how much better a break this new generation of potential alcoholic kids will have because of your work, how much it might have meant to us had our own mothers and fathers really understood alcoholism." Personally I feel that Marty's friends have advised her wisely; that they have clearly distinguished between the limited scope of "AA as a whole" and the broad horizon of the individual A.A. acting on his own responsibility; that they have probably drawn a correct line between what we would regard as professional and amateur.

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