

Editorial:

On the 12th Tradition

By Bill

We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of Anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him Who presides over us all.

ONE may say that anonymity is the spiritual base, the sure key to all the rest of our Traditions. It has come to stand for prudence and, most importantly, for self-effacement. True consideration for the newcomer if he desires to be nameless; vital protection against misuse of the name Alcoholics Anonymous at the public level; and to each of us a constant reminder that principles come before personal interest—such is the wide scope of this all-embracing principle. In it we see the cornerstone of our security as a movement; at a deeper spiritual level it points us to still greater self-renunciation.

A GLANCE at the 12 Traditions will instantly assure anyone that "giving up" is the essential idea of them all. In each Tradition, the individual or the group is asked to give up something for our general welfare. *Tradition One* asks us to place the common good ahead of personal desire. *Tradition Two* asks us to listen to God as He may speak in the Group Conscience. *Tradition Three* requires that we exclude no alcoholic from A.A. membership. *Tradition Four* implies that we abandon all idea of centralized human authority or government. But each group is enjoined to consult widely in matters affecting us all. *Tradition Five* re-

stricts the A.A. group to a single purpose, i.e. carrying our message to other alcoholics.

Tradition Six points at the corroding influence of money, property and personal authority; it begs that we keep these influences at a minimum by separate incorporation and management of our special services. It also warns against the natural temptation to make alliances or give endorsements. *Tradition Seven* states that we had best pay our own bills; that large contributions or those carrying obligations ought not be received; that public solicitation using the name Alcoholics Anonymous is positively dangerous. *Tradition Eight* forswears professionalizing our Twelfth Step work but it does guarantee our few paid service workers an unquestioned amateur status. *Tradition Nine* asks that we give up all idea of expensive organization; enough is needed to permit effective work by our special services—and no more. This Tradition breathes democracy; our leadership is one of service and it is rotating; our few titles never clothe their holders with arbitrary personal authority; they hold authorizations to *serve, never to govern*. *Tradition Ten* is an emphatic restraint of serious controversy; it implores each of us to take care against committing A.A. to the

fires of reform, political or religious dissention. *Tradition Eleven* asks, in our public relations, that we be alert against sensationalism and it declares there is never need to praise ourselves. Personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and film is urgently required, thus avoiding the pitfall of vanity, and the temptation through broken anonymity to link A.A. to other causes.

Tradition Twelve, in its mood of humble anonymity, plainly enough comprehends the preceding eleven. The "Twelve Points of Tradition" are little else than a specific application of the spirit of the "Twelve Steps of Recovery" to our group life and to our relations with society in general. The Recovery Steps would make each individual A.A. whole and one with God; the Twelve Points of Tradition would make us one with each other and whole with the world about us. Unity is our aim.

Our A.A. Traditions are, we trust, securely anchored in those wise precepts: charity, gratitude and humility. Nor have we forgotten *prudence*. May these virtues ever stand clear before us in our meditations; may Alcoholics Anonymous serve God in happy unison for so long as He may need us.

