

# History of The Grapevine –

## Our Meeting in Print

A play written by Marisa P. and performed in Area 93

**SCENE 1) Narrator - APRIL 1944 APARTMENT OF LOIS K. 3 YEAR SOBER MEMBER FROM WHITE PLAINS, NY.**

(Lois K– standing next to an AA member)

**AA Cleveland Member** – brings out of his pocket 2 pg. newsletter from Cleveland Group.

**Lois K-** What’ya got there?

**AA Cleveland Member** - An AA Newsletter some group in Cleveland put together.

**Lois K.** - Great idea. Let’s see...yeah I think we could add to this.

**SCENE 2) NARRATOR - LOIS HEADS TO STEPPING STONES TO SEEK OUT BILL W’S ADVICE.**

(Bill: on the floor beside his fireplace)

**Lois K** - Hi there Bill. I wanted to run something by you. I got this Newsletter a friend gave me produced by a group out in Cleveland. It brought me to thinking about producing our own newsletter in New York.

**Bill** - Well how would we go about it and how much will it cost? I think it’s a great idea but there’s a lot more to it Lois.

**Lois K** - I just need your blessing and I’ll take it from here.

**Bill** – You have my blessings. You’re going to need it.

**SCENE 3) NARRATOR - 2 NIGHTS LATER AT AN EATERY ON 23<sup>RD</sup> STREET NEW YORK. LOIS K, MARTY M. AND PRICILLA P. MEET.**

**Lois K** - So glad you’re here. I have a wonderful idea and need your help. A Cleveland group produced this Newsletter and I thought we should have one of our own here in NY.

**Marty** - That’s a fine idea. Surprised we didn’t think of it sooner, I sure bet those boys overseas could use a little read about what’s taking place here at home.

**Pricilla** - I’m all for it. How can I help?

**Marty** - What shall we call it? (Pause)

**Pricilla** - Here's the buzz??

**Marty** - I kinda like The Grapevine

**Pricilla & Lois** - The Grapevine it is!

**Marty** - Let's get to it. We're going to need others Mave might want in.

**Lois K** - Yes and I think I can get Chase and Abbott (Bud) in on it as well.

**SCENE 4) Narrator - MARTY'S APARTMENT 1 WEEK LATER. SIX ALCOHOLICS: LOIS K, MARTY M., PRICILLA, CHASE H, ABBOTT T AND MAVE. (4 WOMEN AND 2 MEN) BRAINSTORM AS TO HOW THIS NEWSPAPER IS GOING TO TAKE SHAPE**

**Lois K.** - So glad you are all here. So we established to name for the Newsletter to be The Grapevine and its purpose is to connect the New York groups and as many other alcoholics as possible.

**Chase** - I know Kay expressed she would help proofread if we needed it.

**Mave** - Yes and Grace O's husband (Fulton) a noted magazine editor and book author has agreed to lend a hand also.

**Marty** - This is all so very exciting but let's not forget that our nation is at War with Germany and we ought to try our darndest to reach those alkies "over there." Also like myself we ought to have a section entitled a place for women in AA and what about those who have a cross addiction???

**SCENE 5) Narrator - THE LITTLE GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS GATHERED ON May 22, 1944 IN A SMALL MANHATTAN APARTMENT TO SEE THE FIRST ISSUE OFF THE PRESS.**

**Lois K** - What a wonderful thing. Our first print: "Mail Call for All AA's in the Armed Forces."

**Chase** - Yes, 1,200 copies and \$187.10 later. I hope we sell enough copies at 15 cents each or get enough subscriptions to even pay for a second issue.

**Marty** - I hope those boys overseas will not only be glad to get a copy; it's my hope they use it to connect with other alcoholics over there. Let's not mention we sent our copies to 300 group secretaries' right here at home. I plan on taking this with me when I begin on my nationwide tour to promote the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism.

**Mave** - We will find out shortly....

(Scene ends they walk out of the room)

**SCENE 6) Narrator - ARMY SOLDIARS GOT HOLD OF THEIR FIRST COPY**

**Soldier #1** - What's this? The Grapevine. Wow this sure makes me feel connected to the others at home. AA is now printing a newsletter and their calling out to us. It's like having a meeting with the gang back home.

**Old Soldier #1** (Face the audience and read article from Grapevine)

In Their Own Words – Mail Call AA Grapevine, June 1954

I received my first issue of Grapevine (Vol.I, No. 1) in June 1944. At that time, I was in the army, stationed overseas. So far as I knew then, there were no AAs within several thousand miles of me, so you can imagine the kick I got out of that first number...

***SCENE 7) Narrator - THE FIRST FEW MONTHS WERE UTTER CHAOS.***

**Marty** - We need more room. We can't keep working out of our apartments. These subscriptions are too much for us to handle.

**Lois K** - This is only the 1<sup>st</sup> batch of mail: 34 subscriptions from Philadelphia, 19 San Diego, 11 Madison, Wisconsin, 9 Kansas City, 6 Los Angeles, 4 Fullerton, NY (it says here 4 wives are buying subscriptions for their husbands, how wonderful is that...they are giving them as gifts!), and a few others spread out around the country. This sure makes those long late nights worthwhile but better yet we can clearly see there is a need for it.

**Abbott** - Yes but how can we find a place when the banks won't even accept our account?

**Chase** - Hey look here those boys overseas are now calling it their meeting in print. Well that's just what it is "our meeting in print". \*\*\*We all look at each other and say "our meeting in print".

**Lois K** - I like it. We should put it on every cover from now on.

**Narrator:** (LESS THAN A YEAR LATER THE GRAPEVINE WAS CARRYING ON ITS MASTERHEAD THE TITLE, "THE NATIONAL MONTHLY JOURNAL OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS".)

***SCENE 8) Narrator - AFTER ONLY 3 PUBLICATIONS THE EDITORS SAT DOWN TO CREATE THE AA GRAPEVINE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOUND TODAY INSIDE EVERY COVER***

**Abbott** - The Newsletter must represent the general philosophy of AA in the broadest sense possible. I think we ought to consider this: First, the GV doesn't presume to speak for AA as a whole, no one member or group of members can. As editors we are dedicated to furthering the philosophy of life and action laid down in the 12 steps of AA. Second, as editors we resolve never, knowingly, to print anything that might conceivably harm AA as a whole, or any member of AA. Last, The GV takes no position on controversial matters, such as religious beliefs, politics or economics. The GV has no official attitude toward either wets or dries.

***SCENE 9) Narrator - AROUND THE GRAPEVINES' FIRST BIRTHDAY HELEN EVANS A NON-ALCOHOLIC WAS HIRED AS A SOON TO BE CHALLENGED PART-TIME TYPIST/CLERK***

**Helen** - (Laughing) this is quite a mess. Which of these subscriptions has been filled and which ones haven't?

**Abbott** - (PULLS OUT SLIPS OF PAPER FROM HIS SHIRT POCKET) Helen be a dear, I haven't had a time to set our financial books straight but I kept them safe right here if you'd be so kind as to put them in some kind of bank book?

**Helen-** Bud, I'm a clerk not a bookkeeper!

**Abbott** - Yes, yes, well I'm sure you'll do your best.

*Narrator:* (\*\*The Grapevine finally found an office space in the basement of an old church building at 41<sup>st</sup> Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. It was impossible to get a phone in wartime, so they had to use a pay phone on the corner for Grapevine calls. The accommodations were dark and dingy with slanting wooden floors. Yet not only did the magazine grow at surprisingly rapid rate, so a number of organizational improvements were made to the business and circulation side of the office. By year 4 the Magazine was no longer National but **International**. In 1949 the groups adopted the magazine as the International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. It reported on AA's Tenth Anniversary Convention in Cleveland in July 1945 and every International Convention since).

***SCENE 10) Narrator - THE FIRST AA QUESTIONNAIRE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE GRAPEVINE IN APRIL 1945***

*(scene: New York's Greenwich Village group)*

(6 MEMBERS GATHERED AROUND A TABLE)

**Man Member #1** - OK so we're creating a survey to find out at what ages alcoholics hit various milestones of alcoholism in order to chart the life of the alcoholic in graph form.

**Man Member #2** - yeah like: their first blackout, solitary drinking and loss of friends. The idea is to get enough data.

\*\*\*Dim lights\*\*\*

*\*Narrator - The Questionnaire proved to be extraordinarily accurate.* If any of you have taken the 20 question test you already know.

**Man Member #1** - Well it got publish alright. Those editors entitled it "Big Light Can Be Shed on Alcoholism If Alcoholics Fill This In and Return to Grapevine".

***SCENE 11) Narrator - STEPPING STONES. BILL READING THE GRAPEVINE AND LOIS WILSON WRITING AT HER DESK***

**Bill W.** - What are you writing dear?

**Lois W** - Well I thought I write the Grapevine about my experience leading up to the formation of Alanon; after all it is a family disease.

**Bill W** – Yes, it is. You know Lois this magazine is a mirror of our fellowship. I just read an article one fellow wrote about looking up at the sky and seeing AA on the outside of passing plane thinking AA's were coming to get him. Get a load of this: he said if they're going to all that trouble to get me, I might just as well give up now. (Lois and Bill laugh). The laughter that heals is laughter at self. We find such healing in mirrors that reveal our self to our self. "The Grapevine is the mirror of AA thought and action worldwide. It is a sort of magic carpet on which all of us can travel from one distant AA outpost to another, and it has become a wonderful exchange of our current thought and experience.

**NARRATOR** - Many articles by early friends of AA enriched the pages of the Grapevine: Sister Ignatia, Dr. William Silkworth, Dr. Harry Tiebout, Rev. Sam Shoemaker, Fulton Oursler, Rev. Fosdick, and San Quentin Warden Clinton Duffy.

**SCENE 12) Narrator - AA's ARE NEVER A GUM LOT. THE FIRST CARTOON APPEARED IN THE MAGAZINE'S 3<sup>RD</sup> ISSUE, A HUMEROUS FEATURE CALLED BARLEY!! CORN!! WAS LAUNCHED DECEMBER 1945. THE CURRENT HUMOR COLUM "AT WITS END" OR THE JOKE SECTION IS A COLLECTION OF NEW JOKES AND "OLDIES BUT GOODIES" THAT POKE GENTLE FUN**

**Joke Man #1** - Chuck: "What in the world makes your tongue so black?" Dave: "I once dropped a bottle of whisky on a freshly tarred road."

**Joke Man #2** - Son: "Pop, what's an alcoholic?" Father: "A man who tries to pull himself out of trouble with a corkscrew." ...

**Joke Man #1** - Listen to this one.....

A young alcoholic who lived with his old maid sisters. At the end of each binge he would come home declaring that this time surely he was going to die. The sisters, having used every means possible to get him to stop drinking, finally decided that the next time he got drunk they would convince him that he really was going to die. The next time he arrived home drunk, the sisters put him to bed and called in a very religious neighbor--an elderly lady--to pray for him. When the neighbor arrived, she took one look at the drunk and cried, "Oh, Lord, help this drunken man!" The drunk stopped muttering and, gazing up at her in bewilderment, said, "Hell, lady, don't tell Him I'm drunk, tell Him I'm sick!"

*Narrator - July 1945 an article by CHK of Lansing, MI about the Washingtonians was what is perceived to be Bills first knowledge about the Washingtonian Temperance Society and their downfall. Bill used the CHK article as a reference to begin his Traditions essay commentaries.*

**SCENE 13) Narrator - APRIL 1946 THE AA 12 TRADITIONS BEGAIN TO TAKE DEFINITE SHAPE IN AN ARTICLE WRITTEN BY BILL W. IN THE GRAPEVINE**

**LOIS W.** - You look deep in thought dear.

**BILL W.** - That I am. (Typing he says out loud): Nobody invented Alcoholics Anonymous. It grew. Trial & error has produced a rich experience. Little by little we have been adopting the lessons of that experience, first as policy and then as tradition. Our most challenging concern has become the future of Alcoholics Anonymous; how to preserve among us AA's such a powerful unity. Almost any AA can tell you what our group problems are. Fundamentally, they have to do with our relations, one with the other, and with the world outside. They involve relations of the AA to his group, to AA as a whole and the place of AA in that troubled sea called Modern Society. The future may well depend on how we feel and act about things that are controversial and how we regard our public relations. Now comes the crux of our discussion. Have we yet acquired sufficient experience to state clear-cut policies on these, our chief concerns? Can we now declare general principles which could grow into vital – traditions – traditions sustained in the heart of each AA by his own deep conviction and the common consent of his fellows? That is the question. Twelve Points to Assure Our Future: (show the Traditions) while these principles have been stated in rather strong language they are still only suggestions for our future. Also, to help free discussion, I would like to amplify the Twelve Points of tradition in future Grapevine pieces.

**SCENE 14) Narrator - JUNE 1947 OUR PREAMBLE AS WE CURRENTLY KNOW IT ORIGINATED IN THE GRAPEVINE AND WAS WRITTEN BY GV EDITOR TOM Y.**

**TOM Y.** - We need to publish something about what AA is and what it isn't. This magazine now reaches many outsiders and it's unclear to many what sort of fellowship we are and how we operate. I'm going to refer back to what Bill wrote in the forward to the first Edition of the Big Book as a good starting point. Let's see:

(TYPING) 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 A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. 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.

Off to print.....

**SCENE 15) Narrator - AS THE GRAPEVINE TOOK DEFINITE SHAPE IT GREW IN IDEAS & EXPANSION. THIS IS ONE INMATES STORY:**

**Inmate** – I have been waiting for this. Oh boy can't wait to see what's in this month's edition. First things first (turns to the back page of the Grapevine) always a different picture for my wall where the serenity prayer is always to be found.

**SCENE 16) THE GRAPEVINE TO HELP NEWCOMERS**

(At a meeting sponsor sees newcomer)

**Woman Member #1** - Hi my name is Jane. You new to this meeting?

**Newcomer** – Yes, I have no idea why I'm here?

**Woman Member #1** - If you are anything like me you probably drank a little too much and your life just doesn't seem all that happy.

**Newcomer** - Well your' right about that!

**Woman Member #1** - Here's a copy of our meeting in print or the Grapevine. It tells lots of stories by members and how they once felt just like we did but AA offered them a way out. Take it, it will help you identify with other members.

**Newcomer** - Thank you.

**Woman Member #1** - If you look on the back it has the Serenity Prayer if you don't already know it will help you memorize it and if you do know it, it will be a reminder of how to gain some peace.

**SCENE 17) Narrator - AS A RESULT OF THE MANY PERSONAL STORIES AND ARTICLES SUBMITTED OVER THE YEARS A NUMBER OF GRAPEVINE BOOKS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED. Acting as the senior advisor of the magazine, Bill W. wrote more than 150 articles in the AA Grapevine between 1945 and 1970. His articles are collected in the anthology book: The Language of the Heart.**

**Man Member #1** - (holding Language of the Heart) There is so much interesting information in this book.

**Man Member #2** - Yeah did you see this Traditions Checklist the Grapevine published? It was formed from a series of articles written on the Twelve Traditions from 1959-1971. My home group uses it to take its annual inventory.

**Man Member #1** - This is so beautiful (read from Language of the heart pg. 27)

**Bill W. (reads)** - To each one of us, the ideal of AA, however short we may be of it personally, is a thing of beauty and perfection. It is a Power greater than ourselves which has lifted us out of the quicksand and set us safe on shore.

And then he goes on later to say this about the newcomer: He signs nothing, agrees to nothing promises nothing We demand nothing. He joins us on his own say-so. Nowadays, in most groups, he doesn't even have to admit he is an alcoholic. He can join AA on the mere suspicion that he may be one, that he may already show the fatal symptoms of our malady.

**Man Member #2** - The steps keep us from killing ourselves and the Traditions keep us from killing each other.

**Bill W. – (Sitting at his desk reads...)** “This issue of the Grapevine June 1949 marks the anniversary of its founding exactly fifteen years ago.”

“The memory of some of those first editorial meetings will linger with me always. Seated around a table in a tiny cheerless room some place downtown the founders pored over their freshly written copy for these first issues. In those days the enthusiastic founders did everything. Not only did they do the art work, write the bulk of the stories, they kept the books, they paid the printing bill, they typed the address on each copy and finally licked all the stamps. So went the happy paroxysm of creating what was to become the principal monthly journal of our whole society.

“Today 35,000 readers (now over 100,000 across multiple media platforms) see mirrored in each issue of the AA Grapevine a monthly vision of the worldwide thought, feeling and activity of our whole fellowship. It is our great means of inter-communication; a magic carpet on which each of you can ride to the more distant reaches and watch new brothers and sisters emerge from darkness into light.

“on this happy occasion I send my warmest affection to Grapevine readers and staff alike. May God prosper the Grapevine always.”



**SCENE 18) Narrator: Since 1946 to 1986 many important events took place within our fellowship (Our Big Book underwent 3 editions, Dr. Bob passed away, our Traditions & our General Service conference were adopted, Bill W. passed away; which left the General Service conference with one important question:**

**Narrator: The year was 1986 and the question was: IS THE GRAPEVINE AA APPROVED LITERATURE?**

**\*\*Scene takes place at the General Service Conference\*\***

**Trustee -** Since the General Service Conference can't review each publication in time for each monthly publication and its Statement of purpose is clearly defined. I think it wise that the Conference recognize the AA Grapevine as the International journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. All in favor:

**(EVERYONE RESPONDS.....'I')**

**SCENE 19) Narrator - For some time leading up until 1991 many Spanish-speaking members in North America had wanted to read and submit articles to the Grapevine reflecting their own experience. These needs were taken to the General Service Conference in 1991 and a recommendation was issued that the Grapevine begin publishing at least one article a month in Spanish. Then in July 1995 a special edition of the Grapevine was published in Spanish and in July 1996 the Grapevine began publishing La Vina, a bimonthly Spanish language magazine.**

**Spanish Member #1 -** Hola Miguel como estas?

**Miguel -** Muy bien gracias

**Spanish Member #1 -** (with Acent) This is our new magazine. It's the Grapevine for Spanish people La Vina. We need to write our story so other people have articles to read. This is a wonderful thing for our community.

**PAPER BOY -** Esto es La Vina..... Compra La Vina

**SCENE 20) Narrator - THE AA GRAPEVINE IS ENTIRELY SELF-SUPPORTING THROUGH THE SALE OF THE MAGAZINE AND RELATED ITEMS. IT RECEIVES NONE OF THE GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS SENT TO THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE.**

**Man Member #1 -** You know Tom I just love reading this magazine and I see that it has been declining in subscriptions therefore, hurting for money. I'd sure hate to see our magazine in print close up shop.

**Man Member #2 -** Why don't we donate some money?

**Man Member #1 -** We can't. It's only supported through the money it gets from subscriptions.

**Man Member #3 -** Then why aren't people reading it?

**Man Member #1 -** Well I think for a number of reasons.

1. People just don't read much anymore, life it too busy
2. People forget to renew their subscriptions
3. Some can't afford it
4. Others feel it needs to be more user friendly

**Man Member #3** - Yes but the GV has an app now. You can read it on your phone, see look here (shows his friend his phone). It's only \$1.99 month. I read it all the time, especially when I know I'm going to be going on long trips.

**Man Member #1** - I know the GV is hosting contests but the bottom line is we as members are responsible for the GV. We need to also submit our stories otherwise it defeats its purpose of a tool to carry the message. As groups we can stay connected by making sure we have a Grapevine Rep. for our group.

**Man Member #2** - A few years ago they came up with a way for you to call in and record your story (up to 7 min.). It was fun and a lot quicker for someone like me who doesn't have much time to write.

**Man Member #1** - I also give a subscription or buy a book for my sponsees during their milestones and I purchased gift subscriptions for many an inmate.

**Man Member #3** - I get the free Daily GV Quote on my phone. It begins my day with a thought other than my own. I also share it with my friends or as a topic to share on in my meeting. This is what today's says:

[REDACTED]

**PAPER BOY** - Get your Grapevine.....Get your copy here!!!!

**SCENE 21) Narrator - GVR (GRAPEVINE REPRESENTATIVE) IS A POSITION CREATED TO KEEP THE HOME GROUPS INFORMED OF THE NEW HAPPENINGS WITHIN THE GRAPEVINE AS WELL AS TELLING A JOKE OR TWO...**

**Man Member #3** - We need to rotate positions and need a Grapevine Representative

**AA Member (Marisa)** - I'll make myself available. I love how everyone laughs when we tell jokes.

(Marisa goes home to do some research on the Grapevine); Paul (her husband) walks into the room observing her at her computer.

**Marisa** - (At her computer) Wow some of these jokes are really corny. Oh here's a good one:

*How do you get two blonde girls on the roof? You tell them the drinks are on the house. That's me!! (laughter)*

Wait, there's a book of just AA jokes taken from some of the GV over the years. A Rabbit Walks Into A Bar

**Paul** - What's so funny?

**Marisa** - Oh I have this service position in AA. They said I could be the Grapevine Representative. One of the things I get to do is tell a joke at the end of the meeting. Here listen to this one:

Listen to this one.....A driver was going the wrong way on a one-way street. "Where do you think you're going?" demanded a cop. The driver answered, "I don't know—but I must be late, because they're all coming back"

**Paul**- That's some funny stuff. I'm happy you are finally sober and we can laugh together again.

**Marisa** - We haven't laughed like that is such a long time. I love you Paul.

**Paul**: I love you too.

**Marisa** - (Looks back) Thank you Grapevine.

**PAPER BOY**- OFF THE PRESS TODAY.... HERE'S YOUR GRAPEVINE....

**SCENE 22) Narrator - THE GVR DOESN'T JUST TELL JOKES:**

**GVR** - It's 2019 and the GV is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This magazine has contributed so much to our fellowship since 1944. The GV has published 28 books. The latest books really cover a wide range of diversity among us.

- Take Me To Your Sponsor
- AA In The Military
- Voices of Women in AA
- One Big Tent (speaks about Atheists and Agnostics)
- Beginners Book
- Prayer and Meditation
- In Our Own Words (account of Young People in AA)
- One on One (AA and sponsorship into action)
- Sober and Out (LGBT stories)
- And many more

These books are only \$11.50 each and many of them can be purchased today at this convention. Also, you can subscribe or renew your membership at the Grapevine booth in the lobby. The cost is still only \$28.97/yr with other subscription options available.

As you can see the Grapevine is rich not only in history but in spirit. It helps keep our fellowship alive through strong communication of experience, strength and hope shared from all walks of life.

.....**WE ALL COME ON STAGE**.....

**DAILY QUOTE #1**- (read from phone) Sobriety isn't a discrete list of tasks that you do and then check off; it's a state of being that pervades every aspect of your life.

**DAILY QUOTE #2** - (read from phone) The compulsion among most of us to survive and to grow soon becomes far stronger than the temptation to drink, or to misbehave. Literally, we must "do or die." So we make the choice to live. This, in turn, means the choice of AA principles, practices and attitudes that can salvage us from total disaster by insuring our sobriety." (from Bill W. May 1960)

**DAILY QUOTE #3** - (read from phone) "AA's greatest power is not in the program itself, but in the examples of the men and women who have followed it."

**Narrator:** We love you Grapevine and as a member of this wonderful cast. I hope you enjoyed this Grapevine play and remember to do your part to keep the Grapevine going for another 75 years.

Narrator - THANK EVERYONE AND CAST \*\*\*\*\*CAST TAKE A BOW\*\*\*\*\*

**THE END**

Posted: June 2022