

*Won't everyone know I am an alcoholic if I come into A.A.?*

Anonymity is and always has been the basis of the A.A. program. Most members, after they have been in A.A. awhile, have no particular objection if the word gets around that they have joined a fellowship that enables them to stay sober. Traditionally, A.A.s never disclose their association with the movement in print, on the air, or through any other public media. And no one has the right to break the anonymity of another member. This means that the newcomer can turn to A.A. with the assurance that no newfound friends will violate confidences relating to his or her drinking problem. The older members of the group appreciate how the newcomer feels. They can remember their own fears about being identified publicly with what seems to be a terrifying word — “alcoholic.” Once in A.A., newcomers may be slightly amused at those past worries about its becoming generally known that they have stopped drinking. When alcoholics drink, news of their escapades travels with remarkable speed. Most alcoholics have made names for themselves as full-fledged drunks by the time they turn to A.A. Their drinking, with rare exceptions, is not likely to be a well-kept secret. Under these circumstances, it would be unusual indeed if the good news of the alcoholic’s continuing sobriety did not also cause comment. Whatever the circumstances, no disclosure of the newcomer’s affiliation with A.A. can rightfully be made by anyone but the newcomer, and then only in such a way that the Fellowship will not be harmed.