

History of the AA Grapevine

The Grapevine was created by six AA members in the New York area — four women and two men. With the blessings of AA's co-founder Bill W., they published the first issue in June 1944, just nine years after the founding of AA. A copy of that first issue was sent to every AA group — about 300 at the time — and to all known AA members in the armed services overseas. An entire page with the heading, "Mail Call for All AAs in the Armed Forces," was devoted to letters from these members, who began calling the Grapevine their "meeting in print." The title stuck, and today the Grapevine and La Viña carry it on their covers.

At the heart of the early Grapevines, then as now, were first-person stories. There were also news and notes on current happenings at the Central Office, plus reports of the explosion of new groups in North America and around the world. In addition to AA news, there were book reviews and magazine reprints and pieces written by non AAs, including some well-known literary figures. Discussed were such burning topics of the day as the place of women in AA, returning veterans, and cross-addiction.

By the fourth issue, the magazine began printing this description of itself under the masthead:

A monthly Journal devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, in the hope that it may prove a unifying bond to all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of AA as a whole.

The Grapevine was in fact appealing to "alcoholics everywhere" and in 1945, at the request of the groups, it became the national journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. Four years later, when the Grapevine's readership had expanded to include members in Canada and Europe, the designation was changed to the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Later issues of the Grapevine reported on important developments in the growth of the Fellowship, worldwide, such as the birth of the General Service Structure, World Service Meetings, and the publication of the Third and Fourth editions of the Big Book. The history of the Grapevine is the history of the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous. In 1986, the General Service Conference reaffirmed the magazine's place in AA with an advisory action that recognized it as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.