

Inside Al-Anon Family Groups

A Reflection on 70 Years of *The Forum*

I've heard it said in Al-Anon that we have to know where we've been to make wise decisions about where we're going. That has certainly proven true in my life. I can look back at my journal entries, inventories, and book studies and see my progress toward the life I have today. I can practice the spiritual principles I have learned as I live in the present and plan for the future.

Commemorating the 70th anniversary of *The Forum* this year, I've had the opportunity to look back at many past issues. Just as I have grown in my program, so *The Forum* has grown and changed over the last 70 years. Yet, the spiritual principles of Al-Anon remain timeless. *The Forum* has consistently featured letters and sharings from members, illustrating how they practice the Al-Anon program and how it has changed their lives for the better. I have been as impressed by what has not changed in *The Forum* as by what has.

Here's some history: In July of 1950, Ruth G., a member in San Francisco, published the first issue of the *San Francisco Family Club Chronicle*, which she was soon mailing to groups throughout the United States and Canada and as far away as South Africa. In May of 1951, she renamed the 12-page newsletter *The Family Forum*.

Because "its subscription list was the most extensive list of family groups nationwide," it was the closest thing to a clearinghouse that the early family groups had. In fact, Lois W. said that without Ruth G., "early Al-Anon could never have gained the impetus it did" (*Many Voices, One Journey*, p. 34).

But in February 1953, Ruth wrote to Lois to explain why she could not continue to publish *The Family Forum*. Not only had it become more work than she could manage alone, but she believed it was “time for a paper published by an individual to fade from the scene.” In that same letter, Ruth gave her permission for Al-Anon Family Groups to use her title (*Many Voices, One Journey*, p. 57).

In June of 1954, Margaret D. became the editor of Al-Anon’s newsletter, which officially adopted the name *Family Group Forum* in September of that year. It later transitioned to *Al-Anon Family Groups Forum*. In May 1978, the monthly newsletter became a magazine, and the title was shortened to *The Forum*. The separate bimonthly *Inside Al-Anon* newsletter from the World Service Office was incorporated into *The Forum* in May of 1996.

Other changes followed, including the transition to full-color pages and the use of vibrant stock photography and contemporary graphics. Additionally, whereas the earliest issues predominantly featured sharings from wives of A.A. members, over time, sharings in *The Forum* began to come from members in many different relationships with alcoholics, with many different backgrounds, and from locations all over the world.

Reviewing this history reminds me just how foundational *The Forum* has been, and continues to be, to Al-Anon’s unity. What a legacy we are entrusted with to help spread the Al-Anon message by sharing our experience, strength, and hope in the pages of *The Forum*!

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“Inside Al-Anon Family Groups” presents news, policy, and commentary from volunteers, staff and readers sharing experience through service.

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