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Biography: "Women Suffer Too"

Margaret ("Marty") M., New York [City](#) and Connecticut.
(p. 222 in 2nd and 3rd editions, p. 200 in the 4th edition.)

Pioneers of A.A.

"Despite great opportunities, alcohol nearly ended her life. Early member, she spread the word among women in our pioneer period."

Marty's date of sobriety is uncertain, but she attended her first A.A. meeting at Bill W.'s [home](#) in Brooklyn on April 11, 1939, and was an enthusiastic member of A.A. from that day until her death.

She was not the first woman in A.A. The "Lady known as 'Lil'," in Akron, who probably never got sober, and Florence R. ("A Feminine Victory" in 1st edition) preceded her. A recent biography of Marty reveals that there was still another woman ahead of Marty, Mary C. Mary visited Marty when she was still at Blythewood Sanitarium in 1939. Mary would have been the A.A. woman with the longest sobriety had she not slipped in 1944. Thereafter she stayed sober until her death in the 1990s.

Marty was the first woman to enter A.A. and gain long-term sobriety. But she had several slips, and thus other women were able at one time to claim longer uninterrupted sobriety.

Marty grew up in Chicago, in a wealthy family. She had every advantage, [the best boarding schools](#) and a finishing [school](#) in Europe.

A popular debutante, she made her debut in 1927, after which she eloped with John B. of New Orleans. Marty said of him: "He was one of the most attractive men I've met, interesting, traveled, with a keen mind. His family was prominent socially and he was the town's worst drunk." They were both high on alcohol when they eloped. Later a church service was held in New Orleans. Marty, whose alcoholism was not far progressed at the time, could not put up with John's drinking behavior and they were divorced in 1928. She resumed her maiden name and sometime thereafter started to identify herself as "Mrs. Marty M." She never remarried.

Her divorce coincided with her father's [bankruptcy](#) and Marty went to work. For the next ten years she did whatever she wanted to do. For greater freedom and excitement she went abroad to live. She ran a successful business. Headstrong and willful she rushed from pleasure to pleasure. But her alcoholism got out of hand and soon she was in real trouble and attempted suicide twice. She came home to America, broke and desperate. Things got even worse.

She entered Bellevue Hospital's neurology ward under the care of Robert Foster Kennedy, M.D. Eventually she entered Blythewood Sanitarium, as a charity patient, under the care

of Dr. Harry Tiebout, who gave her the manuscript of the Big Book to read and arranged for her to go to her first meeting.

She said "I went trembling into a [house](#) in Brooklyn filled with strangers and I found I had come home at last, to my own kind. There is another meaning for the Hebrew word that in the King James version of the Bible is translated 'salvation.' It is: 'to come home.' I had found my salvation. I wasn't alone any more."

In a July 1968 Grapevine update of her story, Marty said the Twelve Steps were still very important to her. They gave her more than sobriety. They gave her a glimpse at something she had never known -- peace of mind, a sense of being comfortable with herself and with the world in which she lived, and a lot of other things which could be summed up as a sense of growth, both emotional and spiritual.

Marty was a visionary and a pioneer who took on an unpopular cause during an era when women were supposed to remain silent. With the encouragement of Bill W., Marty founded the National Council on Alcoholism, through which she educated the general public about alcoholism and helped shape the modern alcoholism movement.

She wrote two authoritative books on alcoholism, ("Marty Mann's Primer on Alcoholism," (1950), which was rewritten and published as "Marty Mann's New Primer on Alcoholism," in (1958), and "Marty Mann Answers Your Questions About Drinking and Alcoholism" (1970).

Marty influenced alcoholism legislation at the State and national levels. She is considered to be "the mother of the Hughes Act," the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation Act of 1970, which greatly enhanced the federal government's role in [alcoholism treatment](#) and prevention.

Mel B., in "My Search for Bill W.," described Marty as one of Bill W.'s closest friends and allies. "A refined, attractive woman, she impressed me as being the kind of person who can handle great responsibilities with confidence and ease. While some men may have felt threatened by such a strong woman, Bill supported her work and went out of his way to encourage her."

To protect the work she was doing during a period of heavy anti-gay bias, Marty never revealed her lesbianism except to Bill (her sponsor) and other close friends. Her long-time lesbian partner was Priscilla P., once a glamorous art director at Vogue Magazine, the fifth woman Marty brought into A.A. In her last years Marty was deeply troubled by Priscilla's [Alzheimer's disease](#).

Marty made her last public appearance at the A.A. International Convention in New Orleans in July of 1980. She arrived in a wheelchair, but after she was introduced she rose and walked to the podium to thunderous applause and a prolonged ovation.

Two weeks after her return to her home in Easton, Connecticut, her housekeeper found her unconscious at the kitchen [table](#). She had suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage the night before. Priscilla had slept through it all. She was rushed to St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport, CN, where she died later that night, July 22, 1980, at the age of 75.

The New York Times ran a major [obituary](#), and her death was widely reported around the nation. A long tribute to her was read into the Congressional Record.

When Priscilla died on November 9, 1982, Marty's brother tried to make arrangements for her to be buried next to Marty in Chicago, but Rosehill Cemetery ruled that the family plot was reserved for members of the family only. Priscilla was cremated and her remains spread on the waters off the coast on the shore of Connecticut.

(The source of much of the information on Marty's early years and marriage is "Mrs

(The source of much of the information on Marty's early years and marriage is "Marty Mann, The First Lady of Alcoholics Anonymous," by Sally and David Brown.)

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