

We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. . . See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us. —Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 164.

During this holiday season—a time of particular spiritual significance and reflection for many—we want to express our profound gratitude for the opportunity to serve you during the past year in your efforts to carry our message of hope to the alcoholic who is still sick. We send both seasons' greetings and our prayers that we may each improve our relationship with our Higher Power, so that “the Great Fact” continues to be a reality.

A.A. love,

All at your General Service Office*

*See page 12

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A.A. in Romania Grows with Help From Our Friends

Historically, beginning with co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob, all that's needed to make an A.A. meeting is one drunk sharing with another. Now comes word from a corner of Romania, the largest of the Balkan countries, that the miracle of A.A. can also happen when a drunk talks to one of our friends—a professional who sees alcoholics and is familiar with the A.A. message.

Writes nonalcoholic psychiatrist Dr. Rodica Stan from Piatra Neamt, a town that nestles at the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in Northeastern Romania: "I had often treated alcohol-dependent cases, but sorrowfully noticed that the medical treatment and programs of social integration did not lead to any solution. Then I read about the A.A. method in the Romanian literature and also received material from a doctor in Bucharest. Soon I began to explain the A.A. program to my patient Stelica; he was a longtime sufferer of this disease who had already tried the known medical procedures, but to no avail. So, on May 8, 1994, the Piatra Neamt Group came into being as Stelica and I together started to study the A.A. principles."

Soon after, Dr. Stan relates, she and Stelica "came in touch with an A.A. group in Timisoara," a city in western Romania. Together they traveled there for a two-day conference and, says Dr. Stan, "Stelica was amazed to discover that he was not alone and that these anonymous alcoholics live in Romania as well as everywhere else in this world. He remained abstinent, and soon I recommended him to other patients of mine. Stelica spent many days initiating these people into the program of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Today, Dr. Stan reports, "the Piatra Neamt Group has several more alcoholics who are staying sober. They have asked me to write to you at the General Service Office that they are not alone anymore. As for Stelica: After one of our meetings his father told me, full of emotion, 'Mrs. Doctor, I fully regret I'm not your patient!'"

Personally, says Dr. Stan, "I am not alone anymore either. I have learned to be more tolerant, less thoughtless, and I have learned to be my own precious friend. I consider A.A. a real miracle, a gift given by God in order to give life again to lost people; and I am one of those seeing this miracle take place."

On a synergistic note, G.S.O. has also heard from Jane D. of the Arad Group in western Romania. She writes that "among the visitors at the miniconference in Timisoara were two persons from Piatra Neamt.... They went home and found a meeting room. Now there is a group of nine members there, with daily meetings and even a P.O. Box. We are very excited and want you to know that half the copies of the Twelve and Twelve and assorted pamphlets you are sending us will be forwarded to them."

Meanwhile, Jane notes, "another member and I are going to the city of Deria, about two hours away from here by tram, to help five people start a group. They are patients of a young doctor who has shown great interest in A.A. She has found them a meeting room so that in time others will come; and she also hopes to arrange for A.A. meetings to be held at the psychiatric hospital where she is on staff. This spurt of growth is very exciting, and we feel that every growing pain, disappointment and occasional cloud of confusion was worth it. We know more will crop up, but our courage has been given a tremendous boost!"

Mr. Rockefeller Sends a Letter

In the fall of 1937, co-founder Bill W. relates in *A.A. Comes of Age*, "we met with Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and his friends.... Dr. Bob and I, and indeed most of us, were awfully broke. Ideas of comfortable and well-paid jobs, chains of A.A. hospitals and tons of free literature for suffering alkie seized our imagination. But Mr. Rockefeller had other ideas. He said, 'I think money will spoil this.'"

Little more than nine years later, on December 30, 1946, Mr. Rockefeller sent a letter. "Dear Mr. Wilson," he wrote, "In December a year ago you very kindly sent me a copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous* with a beautiful inscription on the flyleaf. To my consternation and chagrin I now find that I have never written you to express my appreciation of this gracious gesture on your part. Please forgive the oversight and accept, at this late date, the assurance of my cordial thanks for both the book and the inscription.

"It must give you the greatest satisfaction to know

that the friendly hand which you held out to a needy brother some years ago has resulted in such widespread extension of that helpful act. The regenerating power of the spirit in which that friendly hand was extended has

been the means of saving countless valuable lives that would otherwise have been wrecked. May God continue to bless you in your work and use you increasingly as his chosen instrument in the rebuilding of broken lives!"

Bill W. Centennial

Probably few (if any) of us A.A.s stopped for a moment in our daily rounds during the year 1979 long enough to give a tiny thought to the fact that, on August 8 of that year, exactly 100 years had passed since the birth of our co-founder, Dr. Bob S.

For most of us, the centenary of the birth of the compassionate physician, famous today as A.A.'s "prince of twelve steppers," in Bill W.'s words, probably slipped by totally unnoticed. Yet, how meaningful for A.A.s everywhere is that invisible marker of passing time. One hundred years ago, in 1879, Dr. Bob was born.

Some say that this kind of low key observance was exactly what our founders desired when they were alive; ordinary stone markers on their graves, quiet, conventional funerals. Both co-founders sought the spirit of anonymity after passing on, just as both had attempted to achieve it in their lifetimes.

This year, 1995, is the centenary of the birth of an infant son born to Emily and Gilman Wilson christened William Griffith Wilson, who arrived in the early morning hours of November 26, 1895, in East Dorset, Vermont.

The rest, as the scribe says, is history, 100 year's worth.

For some few of us still going, Bill is remembered as the man whose legend has been recounted so many times in print, or as a face looking out from a skillfully posed photograph. He was a lanky, amiable friend who may have sat with us in a hotel coffeeshop "shooting the breeze" about some trivial topic, long forgotten. For most of us, who did not meet him in life, Bill may well have assumed in the world of our imaginations near mythical stature. Some A.A.s recently must have created a personal Bill out of an actor's characterization on a television drama.

So what should we do about it, as this centennial day, month and year inevitably come and go? Bill would almost certainly not have wanted a good deal of the kind of exploitation of his memory that is carried on today. We know this because he said so, forcefully and in no uncertain terms, many times in many ways.

What we shall do here at G.S.O. is precisely what we would ask of A.A.s everywhere old or young, newcomer or bleeding deacon. For one minute on November 26, 1995, we shall rest from our daily affairs, whatever they are, in order to thank the God of our understanding that, 100 years before this day, a man named Bill was born.



Bill W. at his desk at "Wit's End," a small studio on the grounds of his and Lois's home, Stepping Stones, Bedford Hills, New York.

Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 10) on your group bulletin board.

First Asia/Oceania Service Meeting

One drunk talking to another; one A.A. group reaching out to A.A.s in prison; A.A. service structures in adjoining states communicating through Regional Forums—the means of carrying the A.A. message has adapted as A.A. has grown. Bill W. saw the need for global A.A. meetings in 1967 when he put forth the idea of a World Service Meeting (WSM); the first WSM was held in New York City in 1969. Subsequently, two “zonal” meetings evolved to meet in years when there was no WSM: the Ibero American Meeting of South America and the European Service Meeting. Many years ago, Bob P. from New Zealand conceived the idea of a zonal meeting serving Asian and Pacific Island countries, and this dream became a reality on March 23, 1995 when the First Asia/Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM) was held in Tokyo, Japan.

Those attending included four officers, six delegates from five countries, and four observers. George D., general manager of G.S.O. U.S./Canada, was invited to give the keynote address.

The theme of this first AOSM was “Twelfth Stepping Your Neighbor Country,” emphasizing the shared responsibility of carrying the A.A. message in this part of the world. Chairperson Bob P. put it this way: “We need to look beyond our own shoreline to the rest of our region, to help bring unity to the area and a single sense of purpose.” George D. said that Asia and Oceania offered tremendous opportunities for twelfth stepping: “There are all the major religions, more people, probably more alcoholics, and more languages than the rest of the world combined. A.A. is not well understood everywhere in Asia/Oceania. It may be thought to be an American, a Western, and a Christian movement. And alcoholism may be little understood in terms of being an illness that is treatable.”

Five delegates reported on the status of A.A. in their country.

Hong Kong—Hong Kong A.A. celebrated 25 years in October 1994, and has one group, 27 meetings and 120 members. Delegate Donna P. explained that because Hong Kong A.A. is very small, and the population served lives in a small geographical area, “all of its meetings fall under one umbrella called Hong Kong Group of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our group functions with one

committee consisting of a chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer, and secretary. Also working with that committee we have secretaries to handle Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions, Literature, Housekeeping, Phone List, and a Telephone Answering Machine Team. . . . A committee/business meeting is held once a month and . . . we usually have many areas to discuss, such as finances, problem solving, sobriety events, meeting support and attendance, etc.” Membership fluctuates greatly due to the transient nature of the Hong Kong population, and summer departures. One meeting is Chinese speaking. One of Hong Kong’s most active Chinese members has translated the Big Book into Chinese, along with five pamphlets.

Korea—Delegate J.Y. H. explained that A.A. began in Korea in December 1982 through an A.A. from Ireland, and now has 300 members meeting in 23 groups. As the number of meetings grew slowly, it was necessary to establish a general office, now located in downtown Seoul. Literature and P.I. committees help carry the message; the Hospital committee brings 25 meetings a week into treatment centers. J.Y. said that recently more women and young people have shown interest in A.A. The Big Book was translated into Korean in 1985; *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* in 1989; and *Living Sober* in 1994.

Japan—Japan A.A. celebrated its 20th anniversary this past March (following the AOSM). Delegate Naoto O. said that there are six central offices in seven areas, serving 275 groups and 3,500 members. Steps are being taken to set up a general service structure and board. Naoto reported that “We have a good relationship with the professional community. Approximately 1,000 hospitals, clinics, and nonmedical facilities regularly receive the A.A. message. . . . with the guidance of our Higher Power, A.A. groups are growing slowly but steadily, not only in urban areas, but also in rural areas which, in the past, A.A. had penetrated very little.” Naoto concluded, “We now have in print a new, revised translation of the Twelve and Twelve in which spiritual terms are more sensitively rendered than in the past edition.”

Vanuatu—Formerly New Hebrides, Vanuatu is a group of islands which lies east of Australia, and at the present time has only one group, which meets twice a week with nine members. Delegate Teresa A. said that “the first seeds of A.A. were planted by Dick K. from Australia who lived sober in Vanuatu for more than ten years, as a Loner.” In mid-1991, an A.A. meeting was begun by expatriate A.A.s; today, members hail from New Zealand, the United States, Mexico, and Australia. Literature exists in English and French, and chapters four and five of the Big Book have been translated into Vanuatu’s indigenous language, Bislama.

New Zealand—Delegate Bob P. said that A.A. began in New Zealand when an alcoholic read a *Reader’s Digest* article called “Maybe You Can Do It Too”

and wrote to the New York office for help. "Early members," Bob said, "relied heavily on the Big Book to work the program. By 1951 there were six groups with a total membership of 46; today there are 4,000 members, 358 groups and 34 institutions groups. The first woman member joined in May 1949." Bob explained that his country's General Service Board is incorporated as a legal entity, which A.A. itself is not: "This enables the Fellowship to enter into commercial contracts; for example, contracts of insurance, lease agreements, and such things as the purchase of literature. This removes the liability from the members of our service structure. Very importantly, it also enables us to apply for legal ownership of the A.A. logos, the words 'Alcoholics Anonymous,' and the A.A. symbols."

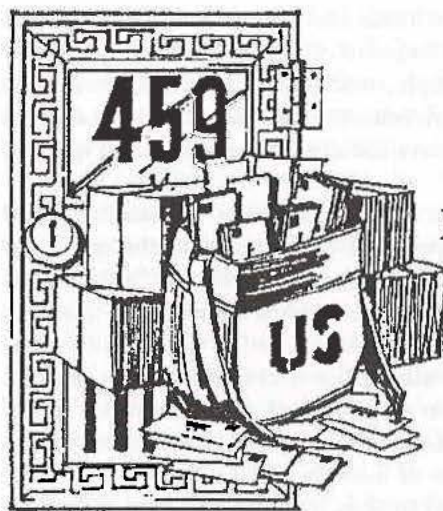
Larry N., trustee-at-large/United States, an observer at the AOSM, described the spirit of communication at this first meeting: "Although the message [of A.A.] has been effectively transmitted through literature alone, most frequently the message has found its way through the personal hands and hearts of members." The "hands and hearts" of AOSM members have now linked A.A. not only across national borders, but across oceans.

When A.A. Literature Gets A Glitch in Translation

"Sometimes when A.A. literature is translated, there are language hiccups," writes Taylor C., a transplanted Californian living in Antwerp, Belgium.

For example, Taylor says, "in the Flemish (Dutch) Big Book, '... make direct amends wherever possible' comes out with a different connotation. 'Direct' (spelled the same in Dutch as in English), or 'rechtstreeks,' means both 'right now!' or 'at once,' whereas in English we seem to intend making amends 'one on one' or even 'face to face'—but preferably after we have some quality sobriety under our belts and not in a big hurry. The Amends Step is No. 9, remember, not No. 1." Quite a few other language hiccups occur regularly, he relates. "Most are amusing, but they can be confusing too, and probably will be 'fixed' in later editions."

"In Antwerp," Taylor adds, "it seems I'm reaching out to more active alcoholics than I did back home in California. Besides making a Twelfth Step call in Tbilisi, the Republic of Georgia, last summer, I was privileged to help a Polish 'potential' [alcoholic] in hospital here in Antwerp. Z. spoke more English than Flemish, but we enjoyed interesting conversations in a sort of Flem-ish. With hiccups, of course."



From the Mailbag

The article "How We Behave in Public Mirrors A.A. as a Whole" (Box 4-5-9, Aug.-Sept. '95), discussing the disruptive conduct of a few members that threatens to tarnish the trust and respect the Fellowship enjoys at the public level, drew thought-provoking responses from members. A sampling

Writing to G.S.O. from Idylwild, California, Bob B. tells how his group resolved a critical politeness crisis: "A local church has been our group's landlord for numerous meetings over the past 20 years, and the relationship between members and clergy until recently had been harmonious. Suddenly there were problems, and they were with several of our members, who thought our meager rent allowed us to run roughshod over the church secretary, the clergy and even fellow members during meeting time. It was sad to see several individuals, all with at least two decades of sobriety, show such little concern for the feelings of others."

Fortunately, says Bob, "two of our more stable members were able to meet with church officials; they saved a meeting place that was home to four meetings a week. Since then, the main ingredient of continued goodwill is regular communication and a renewed effort by most group members to be less selfish and self-centered."

A call for courtesy comes as well from John H., of Lancaster, Ohio. "I have enjoyed continuous sobriety since December 1978," he writes, "and I too have noticed a pronounced laxity in the demeanor some A.A.s present to the public. I agree with Jean P., who said in your article that sheer numbers have an impact. However, I think it also reflects a lack of values. When I came into A.A., I was taught by oldtimers that I must place a value on sobriety; over the years I have strived, through using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of A.A., to regain those living values I let slip away through my drinking."

"A major area of responsibility is to share my experience with the newcomer; one way is to be the best

example I can be inside and outside the meeting rooms of A.A. I have been fortunate in having many exemplary powers of example, who did not hesitate to set me straight when my behavior was inappropriate or when my lack of manners did not conform to A.A.'s spiritual principles."

At times, John says, "I think that we members tend to practice the principle of tolerance to the detriment of A.A. as a whole." Recently, he relates, "a young fellow at a speaker meeting made a comment that was laced with profanity. Afterward, I told him that the meeting room wasn't a bar and that we don't use language like that in the rooms of A.A. This was a minor incident, but I could not, in good conscience, allow this to go on because of the effect it has on the Fellowship. Earlier, a person in that meeting had said it was his first in A.A. I feel I was remiss in not apologizing to that newcomer for the language he had heard; so I too am guilty of taking tolerance to the extreme and diluting my responsibility."

In conclusion John stresses that "this business of sobriety is a life-and-death situation. Therefore it is in our best interest to adopt habits of decent behavior."

Paying Attention to Twelfth Step Calls

Nearly everything you ever wanted to know about how to handle a Twelfth Step call can be learned at a workshop conceived and produced by Southwestern Ohio's District 4 in the Cincinnati Area. Reports district committee member Melody T.: "The workshop was first successfully produced in December 1994. More than 60 people attended, which was remarkable for our small district. We repeated it at our Ohio State General Service Conference in June, and so much interest was generated that several groups decided to have similar workshops in their areas."

Freely sharing its experience, the Southwest Ohio A.A.s have produced a simple flier titled "Pass It On," listing suggestions on how to conduct a Twelfth Step call workshop. The seven main areas of discussion include: (1) Establish Goals; (2) Develop Agenda; (3) Develop Specifics; (4) Publications; (5) Housekeeping; (6) Topics of Concern; and (7) Post-Workshop things to do. The back of the flier carries this time proven observation from the Big Book (p. 89): "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics."

For more information, please contact the Group Services desk at the General Service Office.

How Does Your Group End Its Meetings?

"It is obvious," writes Graham, an Olympia, Washington, member, "that the time has come for the Lord's Prayer to be retired from within A.A. Though it is just as obviously not time for the prayer's retirement from practice within its native denomination, the question of its use inside A.A. (which is 'not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution') has sparked sometimes heated discussion in meetings I have attended, heard of and read of elsewhere in the country. One fact rising clearly from the heat is that we—current members of A.A.—are not united on the question."

Graham makes these observations in response to an article in the Feb./March issue of *Box* 4-5-9 ("Some Sharing from the Pacific Regional Forum," p. 10), which told how the Lord's Prayer was introduced into A.A.: "In the early days, the Fellowship was more religiously oriented. We had no literature, not even a name of our own, so the early groups leaned heavily on Bible reading for inspiration and guidance. Besides, using the Lord's Prayer at meetings freed speakers from the task, embarrassing to many, of composing prayers of their own. As time went on, co-founder Bill W. explains in *A.A. Comes of Age* (p. 197), 'we began to emphasize the fact that A.A. was a way of life that conflicted with no one's religious belief.'"

"In our G.S.R. [general service representatives] meeting," Graham reports, "we found that we are united in our devotion to the principle of unity: for on A.A. unity depends 'our lives, the lives of all to come.' We also found that we are united in our acceptance of the A.A. responsibility statement: 'When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help/I want the hand of A.A. always to be there/And for that, I am responsible.' And we voted to use this commitment in closing our G.S.R. meetings. The vote showed that many who continue to respect, even cherish the Lord's Prayer, realize that it belongs to their religion, to their own understanding of a higher power, and that A.A. must cast a wider net so as not to exclude those of other faiths, other world views. We may forget, but it is true, that not all the drunks needing our help are Christians."

Letters of sharing directed to the General Service Office indicate that an increasing number of A.A. groups throughout the U.S./Canada and Europe are choosing to end their meetings with the Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the serenity/To accept the things I cannot change/ The courage to change the things I can/And the wisdom to know the difference." And, according to the *Grassroots Forum*, the B.C./Yukon Area newsletter, there is a closing prayer used in Russia (which the *Forum* had reprinted from its fellow Canadian newsletter serving the Parksville, Qualicum, Area) that empha-

sizes the unity, hope and love to be had in A.A.:

I put my hand in yours and together we can do what
we could never do alone.

No longer is there a sense of hopelessness,

No longer must we depend on our own unsteady
willpower.

We are all together now, reaching out our hands for
power and strength greater than ours, and

As we join hands, we find love and understanding
beyond our wildest dreams.

How does your group end its meetings? G.S.O. welcomes
your sharing.

The Minority Voice: Watchdog of A.A.'s Democratic Process

In what co-founder Bill W. sometimes called A.A.'s "benign anarchy," the small but often not so still voice of the minority, or dissenting, member is a valued element in arriving at a group conscience. At the same time, Class B (alcoholic) trustee Peter B. of Arlington, Virginia, told a sharing session at the General Service Board weekend in July, "we must understand the importance of not mistaking 'ego run rampant' for a legitimate role in bringing a minority view to the discussion table." Additionally, he said, "it is central to a healthy group process that we eliminate the concept of winning or losing from our motivations and expectations. Either we do it our way and everyone is at risk of losing something—or we do it right and everyone wins."

In A.A.'s continuing quest for unanimity in decision making, within its groups and at the General Service Conference level, assurance that the smallest voice will be heard is built into Concept V as well as Warranty Four, which states "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity. Here on the one hand we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand we take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small." (*Twelve Concepts for World Service*, p. 67)

Class B (alcoholic) Canadian trustee Gerry F., of Humboldt, Saskatchewan, a presenter at the sharing session, noted that "in his Concept V essay on the subject, Bill W. quotes some French character [De Toqueville] as saying that '... greatest danger to democracy would always be the "tyranny" of apathetic, self-seeking, uninformed or angry majorities' (*Twelve Concepts for World*

Service, p. 24). So it seems to me that the primary importance of the minority voice is to keep the majority from becoming flabby; to keep it from making such uninformed, self-seeking or angry decisions."

Then Gerry asked: "But whose minority voice are we talking about? Is it, for example, the voice of someone from the Bender's Group in Elbow, Saskatchewan, who has a burr under his saddle and a good photocopier or fax machine? Or is it possibly the voice of a past trustee whose personal choice for the theme of some past International Convention wasn't accepted and, with nose out of joint, has set out to fix the General Service Board? I believe not. I don't think a lone voice with an axe to grind is necessarily a 'minority voice'; I think it is a lone voice with an axe to grind." Nevertheless, Gerry continued, "it is true that in A.A. we often discover wisdom from the strangest sources. I remember sitting in my home group meeting one evening, frustrated that my wife was late yet again, and I was fuming. My daughter, newly sober at the time, mentioned in her sharing at the meeting that 'patience is simply a matter of figuring out what to do in the meantime.' I find that enlightenment comes, often unexpectedly, as long as we stay tuned."

At the same sharing session, Jane S., a Class B (alcoholic) trustee from New York City, shared her personal experience as a minority voice. "I was born in 1940," she said, "too late to be a beatnik, too early to be a hippie. I grew up with heroism and valor defined for me by the likes of John Wayne, Humphrey Bogart, Marlon Brando and everything Hemingway wrote: They were loners all, who fought lonely and bitter battles against a crushing, brutal establishment. Then I drank for 20 years, during which my heroes were superb fodder for denial. They were oppressed; obviously they were right. Then I got sober. I joined this cockamamie outfit called A.A., where they spoke only of 'we': 'We came to. . .'; 'We admitted. . .'; 'We sought. . .'. Who were these 'we' people? Some of us maybe? Those of us with the sophistication, the managerial experience to understand what was best for the group? Some of us, like you and me, for instance—and privately, I was not so sure about you!"

When she was about eight years sober, Jane related, "my sponsor at the time introduced me to service, and for several years I had a lot of experience as the minority voice. Sometimes I won, but sometimes I lost, and that was the problem. Then I became a Grapevine director, one of the ones with 'power.' The first thing that struck me was that it didn't feel like power. Now when I went to Regional Forums or the Conference, I was one of the ones being banged on. And I learned that my conception of the minority voice, with which I'd lived all my life as one that railed against evil and such, wasn't that at all. The point wasn't to win; the point was to participate in a group process."

The more sensitive the issue, Jane pointed out, "the

more urgent it is to use the principle of substantial unanimity as the voting criterion, and it could take a long time to get there. But I no longer feel the point is to win; it's to find a solution that works for us all. Toward that end it is my responsibility to support my minority position in debate. What happens to me, though, if I am not a part of the two thirds majority needed to swing a vote? There are some personal guidelines I use for myself, including: (1) I not only accept the group conscience immediately, I support it in the best way I can. I don't do it grudgingly, but with a full heart; and (2) After the heat has died down and the dust has settled, I seriously consider the possibility that I am wrong (remote as that possibility may be)."

When she drank, Jane recalled, "I railed, I shook my fists at the walls of the establishment. I was an outsider, a rogue. Mostly I was a drinker. But now I am inside A.A., hopefully somewhere near the center where the firelight is, not at the back where I could be picked out by one of the monsters of my denial that live in the dark. I do not pretend that it isn't difficult. There often are issues about which I have strong, disturbing feelings that put me in the minority. It doesn't matter. What does matter is that I remain a part of it all, listening, maybe even changing the majority opinion now and then—and maybe not, but always trying to find a solution. In fact, my life depends upon it."

SERVICES AT G.S.O.

Spanish Services Desk

Recently Danny M., coordinator of Spanish Services at the General Service Office, attended a roundup of Spanish-speaking groups in Southern California. Opening his laptop computer at an informal break, he pushed a few keys and, there on the monitor, the A.A.s with him were seeing the history of their group as it appears in G.S.O. records.

"They saw their name, address, the date the group was formed, list of contributions and more," says Danny, "and as always happens when I do this, they were very pleased and excited. It gave them the same sense of community, of history, that many Spanish-speaking members get when they visit G.S.O." Here he stops and, with a smile, notes that "many first-time visitors look for G.S.O. at Grand Central Terminal in Midtown Manhattan, because they have heard so much about both." He identifies with all alcoholics, he says, but especially with those in a land where the language, as a means of communication, is different from their mother tongue. "I know how

isolated one can feel," he recalls. "But there is help in A.A. for every alcoholic who wants it, just as it was there for me, and for those yet to come."

A typical day in the life of the Spanish Services coordinator begins, Danny says, "with a call from an intergroup office in California, which needs 250 Spanish Big Books and, course, needs them by tomorrow. It is not unusual that the caller, a recovering alcoholic, would like to share briefly with another alcoholic while trying to place the rush order.

"Simultaneously, visitors arrive from Lima, Peru or Barcelona, Spain and stop to share, embrace and sip coffee; and a stack of paperwork is sitting on the desk, begging for attention. The coordinator's job is many-faceted and challenging, and the rewards are great, like the thrill of being able to assist an A.A. phoning as early in the morning as 6 a.m. Pacific time to obtain information on how to start a new group."

Throughout the years, G.S.O. has provided services in several languages, including Spanish. But it was not until 1984 that the Spanish Services assignment was formally initiated. Today there are more than 35,000 Spanish-speaking A.A. members, who do not speak English, meeting in approximately 1,500 groups in the U.S., Puerto Rico and Canada. The Spanish Services liaison, who does not rotate, coordinates and revises Spanish translations of A.A. materials. Most A.A. literature, including *Bar 4-5-9*, has been translated into Spanish (a catalogue is available at no charge). And in April an Advisory Action of the General Service Conference provided for "a bimonthly Spanish edition of the Grapevine to be produced," with funding obtained from the Reserve Fund. At the same time, monthly articles in Spanish will no longer appear in the English-language edition of the magazine.

Danny participates in conventions, various Hispanic intergroup meetings, Regional Forums and the biennial World Service Meeting, among others. "To have the opportunity to serve our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters is a very special privilege," he says. "Everything we do is meant to make Spanish-speaking A.A.s, the newcomers in particular, feel part and parcel of the Fellowship."

Holiday Gift Ideas

A nice way to remember your home group this Holiday Season is with a gift subscription to *Bar 4-5-9*. A bulk subscription (10 copies each of 6 issues, \$6.00) is a gift that will last all year.

A.A. *Everywhere-Anywhere*, the souvenir book celebrating our 60th Anniversary, is a photographic overview of A.A.'s history. Newcomers and seasoned A.A.s alike will all find it a wonderful keepsake. (B-50; \$6.50). Also available in Spanish (B-51).

The soft-cover, pocket editions (3 7/8" x 5 5/8") of both the Big Book (without stories) and the Twelve and Twelve enable A.A.s to have the program with them at all times, in pocket or purse. \$3.50 each. And, of course, for years, A.A. members have been solving gift-giving problems by sending friends a Grapevine subscription.

The Language of the Heart, a collection of Bill W.'s writings, is a popular Grapevine book; now available in Spanish, *El Lenguaje del Corazón* (GV-08; \$12.00).

Most of these books may be ordered from G.S.O. or through your local intergroup or central office. Grapevine books and other items are available by contacting the A.A. Grapevine: Grand Central Station, Box 1980, New York, NY 10163-1980.

Treatment Facilities

Unity and Purpose Are The Glue of So. Florida's Bridge the Gap Program

"Bridging the gap from treatment to A.A. is basically Twelfth Step work; for many an alcoholic, it is the critical transitional period between being discharged from a treatment facility and being guided to an A.A. meeting by a concerned member." Speaking at a workshop of A.A.'s 10th International Convention in San Diego, California, last July, Joyce K. of Coral Springs, Florida, an appointed member of the trustee's Committee on Treatment Facilities, emphasized that "there are many ways and dynamics on bridging the gap smoothly—ways that are best left to local, district and area autonomy, since that's where you'll find the A.A.s who know exactly what needs to be done."

Joyce, who also chairs the South Florida Area T.F. Committee, explained that the Bridge program in her area "stays within the structure of A.A. We have 15 districts and, hopefully, 15 district T.F. committees, each with a chairperson. In some districts they may call themselves Institutions committees and be financially self-supporting; most, however, have separate T.F. and Correctional Facilities committees. But all are under the umbrella of the local intergroup, central office or general service. We meet together under one roof, in unity, at our South Florida Quarterly weekends. All of us understand that we have one primary purpose: to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. At the Quarterlies we have a T.F. workshop and business meeting where we exchange our experience, strength and hope on how we can best carry A.A.'s message into the treatment centers."

Here Joyce offered some examples of how various districts operate: "In one," she said, "the chairperson coordinates a list of A.A. volunteers willing to serve as temporary contacts. A staff member from the treatment facility phones into the voice mailbox when someone is leaving the treatment environment; then, matching the zip code of the individual leaving treatment as closely as possible, the chairperson sets up a corresponding A.A. contact. Usually this A.A. member calls the facility, furnishing identification, and the patient returns the call."

Another district, Joyce continues, "has set up a telephone voicemail system that is paid for by the local committee. The way it works: The local treatment facility is provided with calling cards for interested alcoholics which read: 'Temporary contact—call this number and leave a number where you can be reached before or upon leaving detox or treatment. An A.A. member will call you and introduce you to our Fellowship in your area.' At the end of each day, messages are retrieved from the voice mailbox, and calls are made. This works very well, especially since the time alcoholics spend in treatment facilities tends to be shorter than in previous years."

Noting with a smile that "my Broward County District, in the heavily populated Ft. Lauderdale area, is sometimes called Fort Liquordale," Joyce said that "our local Institutions committee was started in 1968, so we have been doing this bridge the gap work for 27 years. As of March '95, we had 241 volunteers carrying the message each week to 5,990 alcoholics—3,510 in jails and 2,480 in treatment facilities. And we still needed volunteers to chair 14 jail meetings and 12 treatment facilities meetings. But even when shorthanded, we almost always manage to provide a temporary contact whenever needed, thanks in large part to the help of our local groups. My own home group takes a meeting into the county treatment center just down the street. We provide a chairperson and speaker every other week, and we bridge the gap by inviting the alcoholics in treatment to our beginners meeting and offering sponsorship."

Another way to bridge the gap, Joyce suggests, is to take informational presentations into the facilities. "There are two particularly helpful service presentation guidelines available from the General Service Office, one geared to professionals and administrators and the other to clients. Included in these presentations is a viewing of the video *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous*. And let's not forget the pamphlet 'Bridging the Gap' and the wonderful general service piece Information on Alcoholics Anonymous."

In closing, Joyce told the assembled A.A.s, "I want you all to know that we in South Florida are not a secret. If any alcoholic is leaving a treatment facility from another area or state, we shall be happy to help you in any way we can to make sure that the hand of A.A. is there if they have a drinking problem and desire our help."

Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1 Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



2 Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



3 Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



4 Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebra-

tions given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



5 Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



6 If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.



7 Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



8 Go to church. Any church.



9 Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



10 Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember—"one day at a time."



11 Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



12 "Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board



Items and Ideas on Area Gatherings for A.A.s—Via G.S.O.

HOLIDAY ISSUE 1995

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. For any additional information, please use the addresses provided.

December

- 1-3—*Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.* 20th Annual North Florida/South Georgia Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 51134, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
- 1-3—*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.* 55th Anniversary Golden Triangles. Write: Ch., Box 6501, Pittsburgh, PA 15212
- 1-3—*San Antonio, Texas.* Southwest Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 7-10—*Torremolinos, Malaga, Spain.* Sixth Anniversary Conv. Write: Ch., Apartado 360, 29640 Fuengirola (Malaga) Spain
- 8-10—*Minot, North Dakota.* Fifth Annual Magic City Conv. Write: Ch., 508 9th St. NW, Minot, ND 58701
- 24-25—*Kearny, New Jersey.* Sixth Annual Christmas Alkathon. Write: Secy., 101 Hudson Ave., Red Bank, NJ 07701
- 31-January 1—*Jackson, Mississippi.* New Year's Celebration. Write: Ch., Box 20664, Jackson, MS 39289-1664

January

- 5-7—*South Padre Island, Texas.* 22nd Annual Lower Rio Grande Valley Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 5453, Brownsville, TX 78520
- 11-14—*Kailua, Kona, Hawaii.* Big Book Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 5135, Kailua, Kona, HI 96745
- 12-14—*Pleasanton, California.* 24th Annual ACYPAA Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 328, Danville, CA 94526-0328
- 12-14—*College Station, Texas.* 34th SETA Assembly and Conv. Write: Ch., Box 9120, College Station, TX 77840-9120
- 12-14—*Clarksburg, West Virginia.* Jackson's Mill 16th Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 825, Clarksburg, WV 26302-0825

- 12-14—*Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.* VICYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 151, St. Kilda, Victoria 3182, Australia
- 18-21—*Raleigh, North Carolina.* 29th Tar Heel Midwinter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619
- 19-21—*Jamestown, North Dakota.* District 6 Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1655, Jamestown, ND 58402
- 25-28—*Fort Walton Beach, Florida.* Seventh Annual Emerald Coast Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 875, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-0875
- 28-28—*Wasau, Wisconsin.* Area 74 Service Assembly. Write: Ch., 2737 Morningside Dr., Eau Claire, WI 54703

February

- 2-4—*Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.* Ninth Annual Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 742, Station A, Fredericton, NB E3B 5B4
- 2-4—*Christchurch, New Zealand.* New Zealand 50th Anniversary Conv. Write: Conv. Secy. Box 2062, Christchurch, NZ
- 9-11—*Napier, Illinois.* ISCYPAA. Write: Ch., 1009 Terrace Lake Dr., Aurora, IL 60504
- 16-18—*Calgary, Alberta, Canada.* Western Canadian Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 16-18—*Liverpool, New York.* Ninth Annual Salt City Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 3588, Syracuse, NY 13220

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

December (page 19): Along Spiritual Lines

January (page 55): A.A. Around the World

- 23-25—*Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.* Saskatoon Roundup. Write: Ch., 8878, Saskatoon, SK S7K 6S7
- 23-25—*Honolulu, Hawaii.* Aloha Roundup (sponsored by gay&lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 88293, Honolulu, HI 96830-8293
- 23-25—*Cherry Hill, New Jersey.* NERAASA '96. Write: Ch., Box 8541, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

March

- 1-3—*Bundoran, Ireland.* 17th Irish/Scottish Gathering. Write: Secy., Gargrim, Tullagaan PO, Co. Weirtrim, Ireland
- 29-31—*Tacoma, Washington.* Puget Sound Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 111948, Tacoma, WA 98411-1948

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on February, March or April events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by *December 10*, the calendar deadline for the February-March issue of *Box 4-5-9*.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to us:

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 19 _____

Name of event: _____

Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board





Leticia Murphy

Sarah

Steve

William

Ernie S. B.C.

Elena Pione

STELLA

Ernie

Carl

Susan

Carolyn

Susan U. Winsome

JENNIFER

Tom J.

Hinda

Richard Lee

Darlene

Andrea

Margie

Wilma Niela

Tom

Tom

Alvaro

Joe

Ann

Joe

Cheryl

Constance

John

Kamona

Bonnie

Therese

Bettie

John

Arthur

Grand 2

Corene

Angel

John

Nalerie

Margie

Stella

Eleonore

AWILDA

Georgia

Lucinda

Margie

Stella

Joan

Yvonne

Shirley

Marilyn

Graves

Donald Brown

Angel

Lynne

Maggie

Cindy

Pat

John

Elsie

Lena

Don

Mum

Steve

Helen

Liz Lopez

Carl A. Osborne

Queen G.

Danny

Therese

Aubrey Perera