

All Roads Lead to Minneapolis — June 29-July 2, 2000

The countdown is on as thousands begin to prepare to celebrate A.A.'s 65th Birthday.

Throughout the world individual A.A. members are preparing for the trip—getting their things together, arranging for child and pet care and so on.

In Minneapolis, A.A.s Host Committee—now 3,000 strong, is gearing up to welcome the many Convention attendees. The crew of workers at Hubert Humphrey Stadium, where the Big Meetings will be held, will soon be planning the set up for the main stage, translation equipment, closed circuit TV, etc. The Convention Center and local hotels (where meetings, panels and workshops will take place) will be getting ready.

Merchants and non-A.A. residents in Minneapolis also experience the impact of an International Convention. One A.A. observed the president of the Minneapolis Convention Bureau explaining to a downtown businessman that no one firm would be given the coffee concession for our Thursday night block party — “that’s not the A.A. way. Every restaurant has the right to sell coffee during this event!”

Speaking of coffee, here is some A.A. Convention trivia: At the 25th Anniversary Convention in 1960 the city of Long Beach, California ran out of coffee. At the 40th, in Denver, 1975, the world’s largest coffeepot, consisting of thousands of feet of piping, produced a half million cups per day.

Meanwhile, back at the General Service Office in New York, Convention coordinator Valerie O’N. and her staff are working on a check list of last minute items before the guests arrive:

- Invite 600 speakers to share their experience, strength and hope with us.
- Help arrange a welcome for 100 Polish A.A.s.
- Don’t forget clowns for Thursday night Block Party.
- Make sure 10,000 seats are set up on floor of stadium for Friday night meeting

- Order flags for Friday night Flag Ceremony.
 - Find giant fishing hat to hold names of A.A. members with over 40 years sobriety for Saturday night at Stadium.
 - Remind Minneapolis Convention Bureau to arrange for Blue Line to be painted on street from Convention Center to stadium so we won’t get lost
 - Find parking area for 400 shuttle buses to carry us from hotels to Convention Center.
 - Order helium balloons for Minneapolis host volunteers who will be greeting guests at the airport.
 - Get truck to deliver 50,000 programs to Convention Center
 - Make sure the Convention Center orders 15,000 pounds of coffee and 100,000 packets of sugar.
 - Keep It Simple!
- Just a reminder: If you have not yet registered, do it right away. Forms are available from G.S.O.’s Web site, www.aa.org or at your group or intergroup. Of course, anyone can register on-site, but long lines will be expected, and it will be \$10 more to cover turnaround-processing costs.



Chuck Palmer Photography, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The objectives of the 2000 International Convention are to provide opportunities for rededication of attendees to the primary purpose of A.A. It is also an opportunity for A.A.s and the public to witness the success and growth of the A.A. program around the world, to let the world know that A.A. is alive, flourishing and available as a community resource, locally and internationally.

On June 10, 2000, it will be 65 years since a sober Bill W.

handed Dr. Bob his last drink before he went into the operating room of an Akron, Ohio hospital—then there were two, and A.A. was born, and began to spread around the world.

In Minneapolis we will have another opportunity to “Pass It On — Into the 21st Century.”

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Fourth Edition of The Big Book Is a Long Labor of Love

In 1955 in St. Louis, Missouri, there was “a special candle on the Fellowship’s 20th birthday cake in the form of the first new edition of the Big Book [*Alcoholics Anonymous*] since the founders and early members wrote the original volume in 1939.” So was emergence of the Second Edition reported in the “20th Anniversary Convention Bulletin,” which further noted that, “first, not one line of the first part of the book dealing with the principles of the A.A. recovery program has been changed. Second, the editing and revision have been [co-founder] Bill W.’s personal project.”

Forty-five years later, as the Fourth Edition of the Big Book—A.A.’s basic text—heads into the home stretch, much in the updating process stays the same, though some has changed. What is the same is that the first 164 pages, the front matter, the chapter “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare” and the Appendices will “remain as is,” according to an Advisory Action of the 1995 General Service Conference, which echoed the determinations of all past Conferences that had even considered publishing a new edition.

What’s different is that Bill W., who died on January 24, 1971, five years before publication of the Third Edition, has not been around for the last two revisions of the Big Book. He viewed his own input with characteristic modesty and observed in the July 1947 Grapevine that “I had thought myself the author of the text until I discovered I was just the umpire of the differences of opinion.” (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 107) But ever since the start of the “book yarn,” as he lightly referred to the book’s beginnings, it was Bill’s brainchild.

Today, leadership is jointly shared by a rotating subcommittee of the trustees’ Literature Committee, which is responsible for presenting a revised Fourth Edition for approval at the General Service Conference no earlier

than spring 2001. (A progress report will be offered at this year’s Conference.) The committee, formed a month after an Advisory Action of the 1997 Conference recommended that a draft be developed, currently consists of four regional trustees, two nontrustee directors, the (nonrotating) publications director of A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) and the staff literature coordinator of the General Service Office. Rotation occurred on the subcommittee last summer. After two years of work, some members moved on and others took their places.

There is perhaps no one piece of literature that A.A.s feel as intensely caring about as the Big Book, and the eight subcommittee members have looked upon their responsibility not only as a privilege but as a labor of love. The original subcommittee had reviewed 1,222 new stories submitted by members throughout the U.S./Canada and other countries for possible inclusion in the Fourth Edition. After selection, 38 stories remained and are presently being reviewed. All meet the subcommittee’s two major criteria: The story (1) must, as Bill recommended, reach out to the newcomer who is still looking for the A.A. solution; and (2) must be a standard A.A. story that tells in a general way what the individual used to be like, what happened and what the person is like now.

After receiving input from the Conference and trustees’ Literature Committees about the 38 new stories chosen, the subcommittee will make its final choices, then pass them on to the A.A.W.S. Publications Department for editing. Additionally, after conducting a systematic review of all Third Edition stories, using the same yardstick applied to the new ones, the subcommittee has selected 17 for inclusion in the Fourth Edition. “The goal,” it explains, “is to propose a Fourth Edition that reflects the broadest possible sharing.” In reviewing both old and new material, the subcommittee has used Bill’s writings on developing stories for the First and Second Editions as guidelines, not least among them his description on page 29 of the Big Book: “Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way he established his relationship with God. These give a fair cross section of our membership and a clear-cut idea of what has actually happened in their lives.”

Following the selection of new material, the subcommittee wrote to the A.A.s who had submitted their stories that would not be included, expressing deep gratitude for their efforts and for their participation in the painstaking process. Initially, as the stories arrived at G.S.O., a staff assistant recorded personal identification markers, then removed them from the submitted manuscripts before attaching “anonymous” numbers and forwarding them to the subcommittee, which read each story carefully, then read it again. To avoid conflict of interest and the appearance of preferential

treatment, no A.A.s connected with the project have submitted stories of their own.

"The book," as it was dubbed during its writing, was launched on a shoestring. In 1939 it was published under the title of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, although many other names had been suggested, including *One Hundred Men*, *The Empty Glass*, *The Dry Way* and *The Way Out*. According to A.A.'s biography of Bill ('*Pass It On*,' page 202), he later acknowledged, with a poke at his own egotism, that he "had even proposed calling the book *The B.W. Movement*. The name *One Hundred Men*, fell by the wayside because of objections from Florence R., at that time the only female member. . . . The title page, however, did describe the book as *The Story of How More Than One Hundred Men Have Recovered from Alcoholism*."

It took 35 years to sell the first million copies of the Big Book. Now A.A. distributes nearly a million of them every year in the English-language edition alone, and sales this year are expected to pass the 20-million mark.

The 575-page volume is available in hard- and soft-cover, as well as large-print, and the basic text has been published in 40 languages, including Afrikaans, Arabic, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, Flemish, French, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and Swedish. A pocket-size Big Book, which duplicates everything in the Big Book except the Personal Stories of recovery told by members other than A.A. co-founders Dr. Bob and Bill, has been available since August 1993; it is also available in ASL (American Sign Language).

A.A.s everywhere have watched the revision process with fascination and a sense of personal participation—ever since 1994, when the trustees' Literature Committee mailed a letter to all delegates asking for input from the Fellowship on the desirability for a Fourth Edition. At first glance the revision process looks unduly long and lumbering, but upon reflection most members realize it is in keeping with the democratic method of decision-making that has always characterized Alcoholics Anonymous.

Unity Points the Way At Special Forum on Navajo Reservation

Some described it as an historic event—the coming together of 250-plus A.A. members and friends of A.A. on the Navajo Reservation in Window Rock, Arizona, last October for the Four Corners Special Forum. In opening the event, Class B (alcoholic) Pacific regional trustee Jim C. called it historic not only because of its location but also because it was the first Forum in which two regions and four areas were acting as cohosts: the Southwest and Pacific Regions, working closely with the Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado Areas.

Remembers Brian R., alternate Colorado delegate: "As we drove down the broad avenue that was Highway 264 through Window Rock, a sign loomed on our left. In bold, blue letters on a white background appeared the words of welcome, 'Yáá aát eeh GSO New York.' From the mut-ton dinner on Friday to the traditional giving of gifts on Saturday night, we knew that the Navajo greeting was truly meant. Again and again throughout the two-day Forum local A.A.s from the Navajo Nation came to the microphone to extend their own welcome and to tell us that, in their view, we were all Navajos—people of the surface of the earth."



This lovely, ceramic piece of Navajo art was made by a sister-in-law of the Forum Host Committee chair. A stylized water container it may also be used as a wall vase, and is currently on display in the office of G.S.O.'s Regional Forum coordinator.

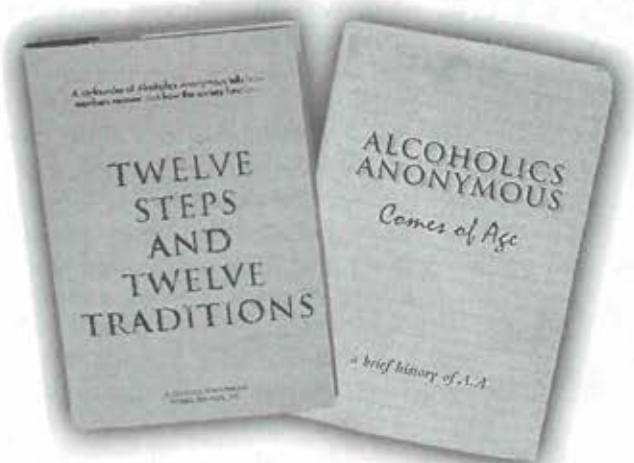
The centerpiece of the Forum was the sharing sessions and presentations on how to carry the message more effectively to remote communities. Reports Brian: "Discussion ranged around our Three Legacies. Bringing Recovery to the alcoholic who wants it was the ultimate goal stressed. Despite some cries of 'we're different,' most attendees acknowledged that only through Unity could we provide the Service essential to recovery—groups sponsoring groups, districts sponsoring districts." Some specific suggestions: Conduct meetings in the native tongue, prepare translations of A.A. literature, encourage a sense of belonging and unity, pack your vehicle with other people so you can have a spontaneous meeting before and after the regular meeting, ask for help from neighboring groups that have successfully solved a problem you are facing, invite people who may have trouble with alcohol to your meeting—and remember that alcohol is the great equalizer.

In a report on "Translations of A.A. literature into Navajo/Dine—How Can It Happen?" G.S.O. staff member Doug R. noted that by 1998 the Arizona area had completed an audiotape

of the Big Book's Chapter 5, "How It Works," spoken in Navajo, as well as a written translation of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. That same year, he added, G.S.O. took steps to develop a 90-minute audiotape, in Navajo, of some A.A. pamphlets. Similar projects have been slowed down, in part because only a very small percentage of the Navajo can read their language, while more than 50 percent understand and speak it. Later, at a general sharing session on Navajo Big Book translations, discussion at first focused on developing a written translation, but as the sharing progressed, a consensus developed that perhaps a better medium of translation would be to put the Big Book on audiotape.

It was noted that most translations start at the local level, when some member or friend translates a portion of A.A. literature into the local tongue. The translation is then submitted to G.S.O., where a professional linguist checks it for accuracy of spirit and faithfulness to the language of the original, staying in communication with the original translator all the while. Only when the lengthy process is complete can the translated literature be made available to the general A.A. population.

In her opening remarks, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Elaine M. Johnson explained that the idea of Regional Forums was conceived some 25 years ago by the late "Dr. Jack" Norris, Class A chairman of the General Service Board, "because he felt we needed to communicate better with each other one-on-one and region-to-region, the better to understand each other's service jobs. The concept of Special Forums came about," she added, "because even regional forums were unable to reach groups that are isolated because of language, culture or geographic distance."



To greet the new century and most particularly the newcomer, G.S.O. is introducing a "new look" for many of our titles. Here is a preview of two of the newly designed book jackets. Other titles will be introduced throughout the year.

Conference Seeks to Secure A.A.'s Future Using Proven Principles

In the October 1947 Grapevine, Bill W. wrote his fellow A.A. members an extraordinary open letter. In it he explained why he and co-founder Dr. Bob felt it was time to rotate out of leadership and become "private citizens of A.A." (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 108) He further sculpted a vision of the Fellowship that would come to pass. "To a degree hitherto unknown," Bill said, "A.A. may be able to function upon the power of its own fundamental principles rather than upon the prestige or inspiration of a highly personalized leadership. Thus the whole can become of transcending importance over any part; continued unity and success can then mostly depend upon God as we understand him working vitally in thousands of hearts rather than a few."

Bill's message will surely ring in the ears of the 92 U.S./Canada delegates as they gather together on April 30, at the Crowne Plaza Manhattan, for the first General Service Conference of the new millennium. Emblazoned in white on a blue banner floating above the attendees, the Conference theme—"Trusting Our Future to A.A. Principles"—will reflect the spirit and intent of the Fellowship: to stay the course established by our founders and, as Dr. Bob admonished at the end of his life, "let's not louse this thing up." (*Pass It On*, p. 342).

With A.A.'s future much on their minds, the 134 voting members of this 50th A.A. Conference—delegates, trustees and directors, along with members of the General Service Office and Grapevine staffs—will go about the business of achieving consensus on matters vital to the Fellowship. Points out G.S.O. staff member and Conference coordinator Susan U.: "All participants in the Conference structure are closely linked through our Primary Purpose—to stay sober ourselves and help others to achieve sobriety. Many, many viewpoints will be expressed, and they will be welcomed. When put together like an intricate puzzle—or maybe a Rolls Royce—the sharings will form a great group conscience, once again assuring A.A. the bedrock of unity essential to our survival and growth in the years to come."

The presentation/discussion topics planned for this year's Conference are grouped under three main categories: (1) Recovery—"Trust the God of Your Understanding," "Clean House," "Work with Others"; (2) Unity—"Our Common Welfare," "The Informed Group Conscience and Substantial Unanimity," "Practicing Genuine Humility Through Anonymity"; and (3) Service—"I Am Responsible . . ." "Our Primary Purpose," "The Spirit of Rotation."

Through workshops, attendees also are invited to dis-

cuss a variety of questions. One workshop, for instance, is designed to attract sharing on "how the principles embodied in the Conference theme are practiced as follows: (1) the Twelve Steps—"Do I sponsor newcomers?" "When was the last time I answered a Twelfth-Step call?" "How do I keep my spiritual awakening fresh in my mind?" "How do I use the Twelve Steps now?"; (2) the Twelve Traditions—"Am I responsible for sharing the Traditions?" "Does my group have an informed group conscience?" "Why is anonymity the foundation of all our Traditions?" "What is my role in trusting our future to A.A. principles through the Traditions?"; and (3) the Twelve Concepts—"In my home group, do I share my experience with the Concepts and Warranties?" "Discuss the vitality of the Twelve Concepts for World Service—how do those principles insure democratic participation throughout our Conference structure?" "What is the relationship of our Conference to general service conference structures in other lands?"

Thoughts about the future of A.A. principles have long been a concern. South Indiana's immediate past delegate Sue F. (Panel 48), spoke to the matter at the East Central Regional Forum in Ann Arbor, Michigan, last September. "We have a group conscience in place that incorporates the spiritual principles embodied in our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service," Sue pointed out. "And when a well-meaning member has what appears to be a better idea but one that falls outside of our spiritual principles, we pause and pray, 'Thy will be done.'"

"We approach the member with patience, tolerance, kindness and love. We invite our new friend to the coffee shop and share about the early growing pains of the Fellowship and our own growing-up pains as well. In other words, we preserve our message, in the spirit of Step Twelve, by practicing these principles in all our affairs—and that includes the affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Our Legacy of Service Cannot Go It Alone

A.A.'s general fund, as most members know, is an open book. But understanding the importance and scope of its services is another matter. Just what exactly is the general fund? What does it do? Where does it come from?

The general fund receives the money contributed by A.A. members, be they groups, individuals, or whatever. These monies are used to provide for G.S.O. operating expenses for service activities.

Last fall, Bill R., steering committee chairman of the One Day at a Time Group in Portage, Michigan, wrote to the General Service Office with a query of his own. "Currently our treasury is running a surplus that we are looking to donate. At our last meeting it was suggested that we find out from you if there is some special project going on now that we could donate to, rather than just to the general fund."

In response, G.S.O. staff member Bill A. wrote, "We consider each and every one of our projects to be special. The general fund, which is made up of contributions from A.A. members and groups across the U.S. and Canada, enables us to provide services for the more than 58,000 groups in our own countries—and to carry the message of sobriety around the world. At present, for example, A.A. World Services, Inc. has earmarked \$6,000 for the production of five pamphlets in the language of Ukraine to help the A.A. community there.

"This is just one of the many projects that A.A.W.S. and G.S.O. undertake on behalf of A.A. members and groups, and they are supported by your generous donations. The general fund is utilized not only to fund day-to-day expenses but, when necessary, to develop new and innovative methods of carrying the A.A. message. In the past the general fund provided the means to videotape the basic text of the Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* in American Sign Language for hearing-impaired alcoholics. Each of these projects cost about \$70,000 to bring to fruition, and this endeavor was made possible by the spiritual sacrifices and contributions of groups like yours."

Back in 1951, A.A. co-founder Bill W. defined an A.A. service as "anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a 10-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to [G.S.O.] for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service." These services, among others, include the responsibility, from start to finish, of mammoth International Conventions and World Service Meetings; "they mean pamphlets, books and," as Bill explained, "good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees and conferences. And," he emphasized, "not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship." (*The A.A. Service Manual*, p. S1)

Although the bulk of the general fund is provided by group support, a portion is furnished by individual A.A. contributions, always within the spirit and letter of our Seventh Tradition of self-support. The 1999 General Service Conference, in an Advisory Action, recommended that the annual limit contributed by an individual A.A. be raised from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and that bequests from members be subject to the same limit and be on a one-time basis, not in perpetuity. Additionally, numerous

A.A.s celebrate their anniversaries by observing the A.A. Birthday Plan—“the icing on my cake,” some members call it—either individually or through group participation: They set aside a dollar or more for each year of their sobriety and send this “gratitude present” off to G.S.O. for its far-flung Twelfth Step work.

Writing in the November Grapevine in 1957, when individual contributions were limited to a mere \$300, Bill bluntly observed, “Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a Society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility—one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and A.A. as a whole will not function unless our services are A.A. as a whole and their bills are paid.” (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 221)

But what of the One Day at a Time Group in Portage? After hearing from Bill A. at G.S.O., Bill R. wrote back, “Thanks for the quick answers to my recent inquiries about the work of the general fund. Here is a contribution from our group’s surplus, to be used where the need is greatest.”

Margie’s Back!



For many years, until she retired in 1996, Margie Janicek was the friendly voice answering the phone at G.S.O. and the warm, cheerful presence who greeted visitors at the reception desk.

Now Margie is back four days a week assisting Valerie O’N., the International Convention Coordinator. So if you call G.S.O. for Convention information you may be talking to an old friend.

A.A.s in Cuba Mark Seventh Birthday with Gratitude and Joy

Lying off the coast of Florida—with the Atlantic Ocean above and the Caribbean below, Cuba—oftimes called the “pearl of the Antilles”—was the scene of rejoicing in January as A.A.s from the U.S./Canada, Mexico and elsewhere gathered in Havana to celebrate seven years of Fellowship in that land.

If gratitude ran especially high, perhaps it was because of the rocky history of A.A. in Cuba. Back in 1948 a small meeting lurched into being, with the help of a couple of American friends, but was short-lived. Not until 1993 did A.A. gain a real toehold again, and for the first few years the going was rough. (*Box 4-5-9*, Aug.-Sept. 1996, p. 7) The Fellowship, such as it was, operated largely through the aegis of government agencies. While acceptance of the program by an increasing number of medical professionals contributed to its growth in Cuba, the groups themselves were having trouble holding on to their meeting places, largely owing to thin purses made thinner by up-and-down attendance at meetings. Even today many members have little more than a few cents, if that, to contribute to group expenses, and just getting literature into the country can be a thorny undertaking.

Currently there are 93 groups, with an estimated membership of about 1,000 members, listed with the General Service Office in Havana (which operates, without a telephone, out of one room in a small structure behind a church convent). Although representation at the seventh anniversary celebration fell below 100 percent due to transportation difficulties and other factors, “representatives from each area were present,” reports Eva S., who was on hand as coordinator of International activities at G.S.O. for U.S./Canada.” At the opening ceremonies, Eva recalls, “I lit the main candle on the platform and suddenly the small auditorium was filled with the light of flickering candles and lighters, and there was a stirring procession of delegates from Cuba’s 26 areas. Many of them had traveled anywhere from five to 15 hours to be there, and with smiles as wide as their island, punctuated by tears of love and joy, they filed in one-by-one as their names and areas were announced.”

Throughout the weekend, presentations were given on a variety of subjects, from “Alcoholism, the Disease” and “Women in A.A.” to “Anonymity,” “The ‘A.A. Group’ and more.

At their general service board meeting, which Eva was invited to attend, there was much discussion of the plan “Sponsorship for Cuba,” which Mexico has been fine-tuning since 1994. The plan not only provides for distribu-

tion of A.A. literature to all the areas over a period of time but also includes a form of service sponsorship. Explains Eva: "According to the plan, six regions of Mexico are assigned areas comprising four regions of Cuba to sponsor, and trusted servants within Mexico's regional structure will visit the designated areas in Cuba."

Eva notes that "Cuba held its first General Service Conference in September 1999. The service structure is still in its infancy, and during the anniversary weekend, the A.A.s concerned frequently expressed their need for guidance through the collective experience of A.A. A source of excitement was Manual de Servicios de Alcoholicos Anonimos-Cuba. This first Cuban service manual was published in Mexico and presented formally by that country's visiting trustees.

Festivities ended Sunday afternoon, Eva says, "with entertainment provided by members and local student artists." By dusk, she adds, "many of us were headed home, sure now that the hand of A.A. would stay outstretched in Cuba to alcoholics stumbling in the dark, searching for a way out."

Getting Involved With Your Intergroup

For a change of pace, perhaps we might ask what we can do for our intergroups and central offices, which are on the front line in carrying the A.A. message to individuals, groups and the public at large. A recent issue of *The Messenger*, the newsletter of the Nashville, Tennessee, Central Office, carried some practical do's and don'ts, reprinted from the December 1994 issue of the Grapevine and adapted as follows:

First, the don'ts:

- If you haven't participated, don't complain that members have no voice in decisions.
- If you decline all commitments, don't complain that service has stagnated and then offer advice on how things should be run.
- If you've been slow to contribute, don't complain about poor financial management.
- If you haven't been reading the newsletters and reports, don't complain that you're not kept informed.
- If you hang back when volunteers are needed, don't complain that you're never asked, never appreciated.

Now, the dos:

- Volunteer to answer the phones.

- Place your name on your group's Twelfth Step call list.
- Serve as an active intergroup rep. or in other service jobs on the intergroup committees.
- Encourage your home group members to contribute time and funds on a regular basis.
- Make personal contributions of your own.

Of intergroups and the work they do to help both suffering and recovering alcoholics, A.A. co-founder Bill W. said over 50 years ago, "Heaven has surely reserved a special place for every one of them." (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 30). Turnabout is fair play and, besides, when we support our local intergroup or central office, aren't we really helping ourselves?

Correctional Facilities

A.A.s Find Ways To Get Literature Behind the Walls

Alcoholics in correctional facilities are lucky to have even one A.A. meeting available to them, and thousands are on waiting lists or get to none at all. So carrying the message to these people via A.A. literature—the Big Book, the Grapevine, A.A. pamphlets and more—is crucial.

Local C.F. committees do all they can, but "pink cans" (or in some areas they are known as "blue cans")—set out at meetings as collection boxes for C.F. work—are hardly bottomless pitchers, so where do their literature funds come from? How do they keep pace with the ever-increasing requests from inmates themselves? These questions have challenged A.A.s at all levels of service, including the General Service Office, where more than 90 percent of the letters that cross the Correctional Facilities desk contain requests for free literature. In November, G.S.O. asked district and area C.F. committees in the U.S./Canada for sharing on financing approaches they have used that make practical as well as spiritual sense, in keeping with our Seventh Tradition of self-support. The response has been eye-opening and heartening.

From *Colorado*, area C.F. committee chairwoman Judy L. reports that "our groups have been very generous with their pink-can donations, so we have a solid base for our literature fund. In order to make the money go far, we don't fill all of each order, and we frequently

limit the number of books or other literature that any one facility is given at a time." Currently, she adds, "our policy does not allow us to send literature into facilities where we have no oversight of the books or of A.A. presence. Much discussion around this topic seems to sift down into two viewpoints:

"One: Send any persons ordering literature as much as they want—whether the request comes from an A.A. group or member isn't important—and let the literature carry the message. While this has merit regarding the effort to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, it is not viewed as either good for A.A. members, the inmates themselves or A.A. as a whole. There is, however, great demand for the pink-can literature fund to be used in this way.

"Two: Do selectively what we can, tying the A.A. volunteers attending [the meeting inside] to availability of the literature. Using this approach, we would try to deliver literature to the inmate who is interested in A.A. and to whom we can deliver our message, ideally in person. This view contends that we may not be able to reach all people and had best do well what we can do, increasing our numbers and correspondence wherever we're able while not trying to make sure that the 65-plus facilities in the state are sent free literature. This concept is often perceived as punitive and counterproductive by folks holding the first opinion."

Not in question, Judy notes, "is our sending the Grapevine and its Spanish equivalent, La Viña, to many facilities that do not have A.A. meetings yet wish to use our pamphlets exclusively. We do this and, as money is available, we will probably do more if we do not expand our Big Book literature availability." A problem that has seriously impacted on C.F. committee efforts, she says, is the stiffening of security regulations in Colorado: "At the D.O.C. [Department of Corrections] facilities, which are always located away from population centers, the routine requires volunteers to have paper clearance, attend a general eight-hour training session plus a two-hour orientation at the specific facility one is volunteering for.

Additionally, no one going behind the walls is allowed to write to, speak with or sponsor an inmate one-on-one. Fortunately the inmates really appreciate our presence. There have been few problems with the A.A. volunteers, and our reputation is good."

Recently, Judy says, "we formed an ad hoc committee to meet with other area service entities and interested members to discuss who is the target of our efforts. Money and A.A. can be uncomfortable bedfellows, and though we have the best intentions, we struggle unceasingly to handle the pink can money wisely and with integrity." This is no easy task, she affirms, in light of the fact that the Colorado C.F. committee has been

receiving increasing requests from the county jails (which are developing greater security and clearance procedures as well) for informational, regular and Big Book study meetings.

"At the same time," Judy explains, "we're working with area Treatment and C.P.C. [Cooperation With the Professional Community] committees to determine how best to deal with the hybrid services being utilized around the state, such as weekenders who have jobs and access to the community, but not always to their own money; youth facilities that are being used for incarcerations and treatment; treatment programs to which offenders are being sent after adjudication; in-house treatment programs in jails; halfway houses where offenders are required to live but not always with outside access; and private facilities that are unwilling to spend money for books—they want to use the free pink-can ones yet insist on 'ownership,' stamping their names on our books and using them as text matter for their mental-health programs even while denying A.A. members access. The list goes on."

Other C.F. areas that have shared their methods of literature funding and distribution include:

Northern California. The H&I (Hospitals and Institutions) Committee, which started the pink-can idea many years ago, reiterates the idea that providing clear information is important.

Florida. A group in Jacksonville sponsors a prison group. The outside A.A.s buy literature and contribute back issues of the Grapevine, which they purchase in lots from the Grapevine office in New York City.

New Hampshire. The area assembly has allocated funds for the purchase of literature by the institutions committee. Additionally, book donations are received from groups throughout the area.

Northern Indiana. Two districts (49 and 51) "operate together and give soft-cover Big Books to any inmate requesting one," says district committee member Jenny S., who also is Area 22 female corrections chair. "As yet we have no women's prison here," she says, "though we are prepared budgetwise in the event one is established. Mainly we help districts that don't have the funds for literature requests."

Northeast Ohio. The area committee raises group awareness of the need for literature funding through periodic appeals to "dig deeper," and the groups are said to respond generously knowing that "there but for the grace of God go I."

Southeast Texas. One of a number of area C.F. committees experiencing success with "creative funding," this one reports that a system of matching funds largely pays for literature going into the 17 area facilities. The Houston

C.F. Committee functions as part of the intergroup, and at the annual conference, where there are inmate speakers, the basket is passed; later its collection total is matched by the intergroup. The Houston Area Committee also holds one-day workshops—they don't raise funds directly, but in orienting A.A.s to C.F. work they raise their consciousness to the urgent need for literature.

Virginia. D.C.M. (District 28) Tom Z. lists "four key ways in which we raise money for literature we donate to local correctional facilities: (1) My home group holds a raffle at every meeting—five chances for a dollar. The winner receives a book of his or her choice. All money taken in over the cost of the book is used to buy literature for the inmates.

(2) We have literature dances, and the price of admission is either an A.A.-approved piece of literature or \$7.00. (3) We have a pink can into which members toss their loose change. (4) We have 'eating meetings' to which people bring a dish to share—and an A.A. book or pamphlet for an inmate.

P.I.

How Will the Media Report A.A. at Minneapolis 2000?

Tens of thousands of A.A.s, their Al-Anon partners and friends will be on hand when A.A. kicks off its International Convention in Minneapolis on June 29—and so will accredited members of the print and electronic media from many countries around the world. Oftimes they will be scribbling and filing informational stories in the pressroom set up by the General Service Office, but chances are they also will be roaming the streets with writing pads in hand and ubiquitous cameras close by, looking for one-on-one interviews and pictures. They are reporters, and that's their job. But what about us as members of Alcoholics Anonymous? How do we maintain personal anonymity at the public level, yet cooperate with our friends in the media who over the years have so greatly helped to carry the A.A. message of sobriety?

Eager to do right by A.A. and our friends in the fourth estate, G.S.O. has consulted with a public relations firm to assure the best possible Traditions with all media representatives in the spirit of Tradition Eleven

("Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films"). Press Information Kits are being disseminated to major daily newspapers and radio/TV networks, locally and internationally, and two G.S.O. staff members—Bill A., who heads the Public Information desk; and Warren S., coordinator of matters relating to C.P.C. (Cooperation With the Professional Community)—will spell each other in the pressroom so that someone from G.S.O. will be ever-available to explain what the Fellowship is, what it isn't, and to answer reporters' questions. Every bit as welcoming as Bill and Warren in the pressroom will be the signature A.A. coffeepot, big and kept filled to the max.

Says Bill: "Our goal is to utilize the pressroom as a springboard for the effective dissemination of information about all aspects of A.A., with our Traditions of nonaffiliation and anonymity in the forefront. When it comes to personal interviews, I hope we all will remember that no one person speaks for A.A. Each one of us is A.A.—the Twelve Traditions bind us, nothing and no one else. In the pressroom we can recite the Anonymity Tradition 'til we're blue in the face, but it won't mean a thing out on the streets unless all A.A. members at the Convention are careful not to use their last names, nor to let their pictures be taken full-face. The fact is that it all comes down to us, to each and every one of us, to take responsibility for our anonymity, personally and collectively. As Tradition Twelve explains, it is 'the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.'"

In preserving anonymity at the public level in Minneapolis, A.A.s will have plenty of assistance. All of our seven Class-A (nonalcoholic) trustees will be there, Warren notes, "and they can do what we A.A.s can't—face the camera head-on and use their last names without threat to themselves or the Fellowship. All are highly respected professionals, and from matters of philosophy and organization to public information and international sharing, they are more than prepared to discuss every aspect of A.A. with the media."

Another source of help is the popular A.A. Web site—www.aa.org—which for the first time will post on-the-spot releases concerning Convention activities. These days the Web site features year-round the Anonymity Letter that the trustees' P.I. Committee has annually directed to the media for many years now. Among other things, it asks the media to identify A.A.s by their first names only and to avoid using recognizable photos of them. It further offers thanks for coverage worldwide that "has been a principal means of bringing alcoholics into our Fellowship."

C.P.C.

The A.A. Member— A Vital Resource For Professionals

"We A.A.s are not always the first to connect with the individual suffering from alcoholism and asking for help," says Calvin J., former chairman of the Maryland Area's Cooperation With the Professional Committee, and current P.I. chair. "Early on, I was told that as a grateful member of A.A., I not only could help alcoholics wandering into an A.A. meeting but also could be the link to A.A. for those who admit their illness and sense of hopelessness to a doctor, clergyman or other professional."

Calvin's opportunity to carry the message arose during a routine medical examination. "My doctor started talking about how the quality of my life might improve if I would only do a few simple things to control my diabetes," he recalls. "After remarking that his words sounded like the gentle nudging of an A.A. sponsor during my early nondrinking days, I explained that until I admitted I could no longer control my drinking and became ready to follow a few simple guidelines on how to get and stay sober, my life just kept on disintegrating."

Thus did Calvin let his physician know that he was an alcoholic recovering in A.A. "I promised I would try to give my diabetes priority right up there with my alcoholism," he relates. "Before leaving his office, I wrote my phone numbers on a piece of paper and handed it to the doctor, suggesting that he call the next time he was consulted by an alcoholic who needed help."

Several weeks later the doctor phoned. "He asked if he could give my number to a patient who had been urged by his family to seek help for his drinking, and I answered most assuredly. 'Yes,'" Calvin says. "The person did call, and we went to an A.A. meeting together that same night. I'm certain the doctor could have had the young fellow contact A.A. directly, but remembering how scared I was to walk into my first meeting, I feel that our one-on-one contact was of great help to him during a difficult time. The meeting was one I hadn't been to in years. But once in the door, I met several A.A. acquaintances and introduced my new friend to them; in turn they introduced us to other members of the group. We A.A.s have a great way of making the newcomer feel welcome and a part of our Fellowship."

Calvin's successful effort to sponsor his doctor and so help a sick alcoholic would be music to the ears of A.A.'s good friend, the late John L. Norris, M.D., nonalcoholic chairman of the General Service Board. "Dr. Jack, as he

was affectionately called, said in the January 1976 Grapevine that "many members of A.A. have gone back to the [professionals] who tried to help them, and have told of their recovery. This has opened many doors, and I continue to urge A.A. members. . . to identify themselves as individuals recovering from alcoholism wherever and whenever the disclosure seems opportune. . . . Sponsor your doctor, your clergyman, your lawyer, your boss, a social worker, a policeman. They need the knowledge and understanding that only you can give as you tell them honestly of your own experience."

Offering a glimpse of A.A. from the doctor's end, in the same issue of the Grapevine, a California physician who was also in A.A. wrote of "my friend the doctor. . . who likes drunks: When some of them ask for medication, he writes 'A.A.' on a prescription pad. If they tell him the speakers at A.A. meetings are dull, he laughs and says they are not supposed to be entertainers. If they object to talking to me, he tells them nobody understands a drunk like another drunk. One patient said he liked snuff, and the doctor spent a long time finding him an old-fashioned snuffbox. He told me once that he loved the people but hated the alcoholism that was killing them."

This doctor was familiar with A.A. and, fortunately, there are others like him. According to the Fellowship's 1998 random Membership Survey, 60% of the respondents said that before coming to A.A. they had received some type of medical, psychological or spiritual treatment or counseling; 75% of those members said it had played a significant role in directing them to the Fellowship. Significantly, 62% received some type of treatment or counseling after joining A.A.; 83% of those same members considered it vital to their continuing recovery.

When it comes to caring for alcoholics, however, health care givers and other professionals can't recommend A.A. to sick alcoholics—or fully understand the needs of a patient or client who is also an A.A. member—if they don't know what we're about. So, says Calvin, "when I visit my doctor's office, I always leave him with a few pamphlets—'Problems Other Than Alcohol,' 'A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional' and 'If You Are a Professional. . . A.A. Wants to Work with You,' to name a few—and reiterate my desire to be of help." Many A.A.s also escort their doctors to open meetings that they never would attend on their own. And C.P.C. committees across the U.S./Canada have hosted A.A. orientation sessions for interested professionals in their communities.

Some time ago, Calvin adds, "I spoke to my pastor about this precious gift of sobriety that I've received and have become willing to share. As an A.A. member, I am responsible for carrying our message of recovery, for being a personal link to the Fellowship for all who may need us."

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.

April

- 1-2—*Bemidji, Minnesota*. Area 35 Spring Assembly. Write: Secy., 816 Fir St., Brainerd, MN 56401
- 7-9—*Itasca, Illinois*. 26th Annual Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 460, McHenry, IL 60051
- 7-9—*Fort Wayne, Indiana*. 20th Annual NE Indiana Conv. Write: Ch., 8306 Schlatter Rd., Leo, IN 46765
- 7-9—*Sparks, Nevada*. 29th Reno Spring Festival. Write: Ch., Box 72, Reno, NV 89504
- 7-9—*Jamestown, New York*. Our Principles - Past, Present & Future. Write: Ch., Box 873, Jamestown, NY 14701
- 7-9—*Fremont, Ohio*. National Men's Conf. Write: Ch., 2821 Avondale, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
- 7-9—*Sandusky, Ohio*. 25th NE Ohio Mini-Conference. Write: Ch., Box 608871, Cleveland, OH 44108-8871
- 7-9—*Salt Lake City, Utah*. 17th UCYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 1661, Salt Lake City, UT 84110
- 7-9—*Tarrytown, New York*. 35th Annual SENY Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1688, Madison Square Station, New York, NY 10159
- 8-9—*Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada*. 38th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2014, Battleford, SK S0M 0E0
- 14-15—*Manhattan, Kansas*. 23rd Anniversary. Write: Ch., 2800 Nevada St., Manhattan, KS 66502
- 14-16—*Banff, Alberta, Canada*. 27th Banff Roundup. Write: Ch., c/o Calgary Intgp., #2-4015-1 St. SE, Calgary, AB T2G 4X7
- 14-16—*Bonnyville, Alberta, Canada*. Dist. 3 38th Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 7066, Bonnyville, AB T9N 2H4
- 14-16—*Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada*. Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 453, Dauphin, MB R7N 2U3
- 14-16—*Estes Park, Colorado*. 13th Annual Area Corrections Conf. Write: Ch., 4412 E. Mulberry #100, Ft. Collins, CO 80524
- 14-16—*St. Louis, Missouri*. Show Me State Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 29214, St. Louis, MO 63126
- 14-16—*Lincoln, Nebraska*. Spring Fling 2000. Write: Ch., Box 30691, Lincoln, NE 68503
- 14-16—*Grand Forks, North Dakota*. Northern Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 14121, Grand Forks, ND 58208

- 14-16—*Erie, Pennsylvania*. Erie Area Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 10443, Erie, PA 16514-0443
- 14-16—*Chattanooga, Tennessee*. Tennessee Area 64 Assembly. Write: Trsr., Box 4904, Chattanooga, TN 37405
- 14-16—*Georgetown, Texas*. Ninth Chisholm Trail Conv. Write: Ch., 2118 Andover Dr., Round Rock, TX 78664
- 20-23—*Eureka Springs, Arkansas*. Springtime in the Ozarks. Write: Ch., 629 West Olive, Rogers, AR 72756
- 20-23—*Erie, Pennsylvania*. GLRCYPAA X. Write: Ch., Box 8698, Erie, PA 16505-0698
- 20-24—*Canberra, Australia*. 35th National Convention. Write: Secy., Box 5179, Kingston ACT 2604, Canberra City, Australia
- 21-23—*Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*. Celebrate Sobriety Roundup (sponsored by gay and lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 93516, Nelson Park, Vancouver, BC V6E 4L7
- 21-23—*Superior, Wisconsin*. 55th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 996, Superior, WI 54880
- 26-28—*Dallas, Texas*. Gathering of the Eagles. Write: Ch., Box 35865, Dallas Texas 75235
- 28-30—*Gananoque, Ontario, Canada*. Dist. 38 Conf. Write: Ch., Lot 61, Indian River Estates, Cereso, NY 13691
- 28-30—*Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada*. 36th Annual Blossom Time Conv. Write: Ch., Box 851, Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6V6
- 28-30—*Galesburg, Illinois*. Spring Fling 2000. Write: Ch., Box 1772, Galesburg, IL 61402-1772
- 28-30—*Lake Charles, Louisiana*. 47th Conv. Write: Ch., Box 52, Lake Charles, LA 70602
- 28-30—*Fairmont, Minnesota*. Sixth Annual Sunlight of the Spirit Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 748, Fairmont, MN 56031

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

April (page 37): Old-Timers Corner

May (page 47): Your Move

May

- 4-7—*Ermioni, Peloponnese Peninsula, Greece*. Sixth International Conv. Write: Ch., Thiseos 22, Paleo Faliro, Greece 17562
- 4-7—*Daytona Beach, Florida*. 10th Daytona Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 214911, South Daytona, FL 32121
- 5-7—*Oliver, British Columbia, Canada*. 16th Annual South Okanagan Oliver Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 392, Oliver, BC V0H 1T0
- 5-7—*Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada*. 34th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 10073, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6T6
- 5-7—*Grand Rapids, Minnesota*. Iron Range Get-Together. Write: Ch., 2310 1/2 1st Ave., Apt. B, Hibbing, MN 55746
- 5-7—*Grants Pass, Oregon*. 25th Annual Rogue Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1741, Grants Pass, OR 97528
- 5-7—*Greensburg, Pennsylvania*. 53rd Laurel Highlands Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6, Bovard, PA 15619-0006
- 5-7—*Orangeburg, South Carolina*. Spring Roundup V. Write: Ch., 179 Treadwell St., Orangeburg, SC 29115
- 5-7—*San Angelo, Texas*. 13th Annual Concho Valley Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1341, San Angelo, TX 76902

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on June, July and August events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by April 10, the calendar deadline for the June-July 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): _____

Flip up this end of page - for events on reverse side

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

5-7—*Brattleboro, Vermont*. Vermont Conv. Write: Ch., 33 Allen St., Rutland VT 05701

5-7—*Jackson, Wyoming*. 2000 Spring Conv. Write: Ch., Box 95, Jackson, WY 83001

12-13—*Pembroke, Ontario, Canada*. Mother's Day Conf. Write: Ch., 172 Mary St., Pembroke, ON K8A 5V6

19-21—*Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada*. Kamloops Roundup. Write: Ch., 29-254 Royal Ave., Kamloops, BC V2B 3P3

19-21—*Kansas City, Kansas*. 30 Years of Miracles. Write: Ch., c/o Central Office, 200 E. 18th Ave., N. Kansas City, MO 64116

19-21—*Covington, Louisiana*. 11th Southeast Louisiana Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 733, Ponchatoula, LA 70454

19-21—*Westbrookville, New York*. Orange County Annual Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 210, Middletown, NY 10940-0210

20-21—*Mesquite, Texas*. NETA Correctional Facility Workshop. Write: Ch., 1810 Wynnjoyce #102, Garland, TX 75043

26-28—*Waycross, Georgia*. Okefenokee Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 403, Waycross, GA 31502

26-28—*Bloomington, Minnesota*. Gopher State Round XXVII. Write: Ch., Box 65295, St. Paul, MN 55165-0295

June

1-4—*Indian Wells, California*. Desert Pow Wow. Write: Ch., Box 10128, Palm Desert, CA 92255-0128

2-4—*Flagstaff, Arizona*. Flagstaff Roundup. Write: Ch., 3120 N. Nancy Way, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

2-4—*San Jose, California*. NCC 53rd Annual Summer Conf. Write: Ch., 1308 Vine Circle, Rocklin, CA 95765-4710

9-11—*Calgary, Alberta, Canada*. 19th Annual Gratitude Roundup. Write: Ch., c/o Central Off., #2 4015 1st SE, Calgary, AB T2G 4X7

9-11—*Marshalltown, Iowa*. Area 24 Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 31, Story City, IA 50248

9-11—*Akron, Ohio*. 65th Founders Day. Write: Ch., Box 12, Akron, OH 44309

15-18—*Hagerstown, Maryland*. 30th State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 453, Neistenstown, MD 21136

23-25—*Moodus, Connecticut*. Soberfest 2000. Write: Ch., 280 William St., 3rd Fl., West Haven, CT 06516-5920

23-25—*Exeter, Rhode Island*. 24th Annual OSYPAA Conf. Write: Ch., Box 41091, Providence, RI 02940

30-July 5—*Phoenix, Arizona*. 4th of July Phenoma 2000. Write: Ch., 2109N 90th Place, Rear Apt., Chandler, AZ 85224-1642.

July

21-23—*Willow, Alaska*. Third Annual Denali Conf. Write: Ch., Box 875617, Wasilla, AK 99687-5617

21-23—*Des Moines, Iowa*. Capital City Conf. Write: Ch., Box 30135, Des Moines, IA 50310

27-30—*Silver Creek, Colorado*. Eighth Fellowship of the Spirit Conf. Write: Ch., Box 19348, Boulder, CO 80308

28-30—*Manitou Beach, Saskatchewan, Canada*. Second Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1146, Watrous, SK S0K 4T0