



## CHRISTMAS GREETING

To nearly everyone Christmas brings thoughts of warm ties to be renewed, gifts to be given and received. Fresh and wondrous is the vision of Him who shines down the centuries to all who will look up and behold.

To us of A.A., the Christmas experience is sure to be doubly meaningful. We know ties more precious than any we had dreamed; we have received the gift of life itself and may freely pass that on; each of us has seen and felt a redeeming radiance which he knows to be the Grace of God. What more could we ask; what more could we receive?

Yes, it's a Merry Christmas — a Merry Christmas indeed!

The Trustees, the Grapeviners, Dr. Bob, Anne, Bobbie, Lois and I wish you the happiest of New Years —

As ever,

*Co-founder Bill W.'s 1947 holiday letter to the Fellowship.*

— A.A. Archives

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## Rotation Is 'Anonymity in Action'

"After being literally poured into a treatment center, I came home to A.A. with my tail between my legs," recalls Harvey B. of Los Angeles. "My sponsor was service-oriented and I got active fast, first as the group's coffee maker, then as an officer. Everyone knew who I was, I felt like a bigshot for the first time in years—and I loved every minute I spent up there in front of meetings.

"At my sponsor's urging (translate: 'You're getting too big for your britches'), I reluctantly took personal inventory. It became painfully clear that I was limelight happy; in the name of service, my ego was out there soaking up praise and recognition. With my sponsor's help, I began to appreciate the principles of rotation as expressed in the Second Tradition: '. . . Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.'

"Once I was able to let go, it was a relief to realize that I am but one small part of a great whole, I also had to admit that without rotation, I might never have held office in the first place. While the process of rotation limits the length of individual service in all A.A. positions, from the board of trustees to the General Service Office to the group level, it also gives the newcomer a chance to serve."

Addressing the importance of rotation in A.A., past trustee Joan U., then the delegate from South Dakota, told the 1977 General Service Conference that rotation can be a real step forward in personal growth—a step into humility that for some people is the spiritual essence of anonymity. This means, she explained, "that we forgo personal prestige in A.A. work. Rotation brings spiritual rewards more enduring than fame. With no A.A. 'status' at stake, we have complete freedom to serve as we are needed. We don't have to compete for titles or praise."

Urging that newcomers be given responsibility within the group—"they have new knowledge and capabilities that can do much for A.A."—Joan noted that "rotation gives each member the feeling of being a vital part of the group. I will never forget my own feelings of belonging

the first time I was asked to be responsible for a group job. People there trusted me!"

Joan emphasized her belief that "A.A.s have the responsibility to see that power never becomes an invading force in the Fellowship. We have the experiences of those who have gone before to help us. Rotation keeps oldtimers from feeling they own some particular A.A. position; and it insures that opportunities from service will be shared among many of us, not just a self-selected few."

Many A.A.s have found that rotating out of office is a happy experience. Member Don S. of New York City observes, "It truly is anonymity in action! In my experience, rotation keeps individual members from getting too attached to service jobs; it permits freedom and encourages humility. For me personally, rotation has been a learning experience. The first time I pried myself loose from a group office I loved, it hurt—especially when I saw my successor doing a better job! But then I remembered that rotation is practiced not to put me out of a job but to give somebody else the chance to serve and grow in A.A. That felt really good."

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## 1988 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service, and offer a unique opportunity for A.A. group or area representatives and individual A.A.s in a particular region to share their concerns with one another and with trustees, G.S.O. and Grapevine directors and staff members. Through this exchange of ideas and information, the common purpose of all A.A. service work is emphasized.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum are sent to G.S.R.s, area committee members, delegates, and central offices approximately two months ahead of time. In 1988, the weekend Forums will be held as follows:

- *Pacific Region* — June 17-19: Sheridan Anchorage Hotel, Anchorage, Alaska
- *Eastern Canada Region* — Sept. 23-25: Auberge des Gouverneurs, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada
- *Western Canada Region* — Oct. 21-23: Red Deer Lodge, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada
- *Southeast Region* — Dec. 2-4: Diplomat Resort & Country Club, Hollywood, Florida

For additional information, please write: Regional Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

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**Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 11) on your group bulletin board.**

## G.S.O. Nears 50 Years of Service

Fifty years ago this December, when A.A. was a fledgling movement long on potential but desperately short on funds, co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob sought financial help from the Rockefeller Foundation. Although John D. Rockefeller Jr. finally contributed \$5,000, he flatly turned down their plea for a large sum because, he said, "I am afraid money will spoil this thing." His decision, disappointing to Bill and Dr. Bob at the time, was a major catalyst in charting the future of the Fellowship. It helped to save us from the hazards of money, property and professionalism, which had toppled well-intentioned self-help movements in the past.

Mr. Rockefeller did encourage his colleagues and friends, among them some distinguished financiers, to help A.A. develop a structure of self-support; and in 1938 the nonprofit Alcoholic Foundation—renamed the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1954—was formed. The first board consisted of five trustees, three nonalcoholics and two alcoholics, one of whom soon got drunk and had to be replaced.

One of the Foundation's first acts was to assume responsibility for Works Publishing Company, which had been set up to handle publication of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The company was so named because Dr. Bob's wife, Anne, was fond of saying, "A.A. works! It works!" Works Publishing was incorporated in 1940 and, in 1959, was renamed Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

In the late 1930s, the Foundation office was a cubbyhole at 30 Vesey Street in New York City, staffed by Bill and a nonalcoholic assistant, Ruth Hock. They answered many of the thousands of letters for help that arrived after publication of the article, "Alcoholics and God," in the old *Liberty* magazine, followed by a series of pieces about A.A. in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. Bill had



30 Vesey St.



415 Lexington Ave.

selected the office because it was located as close to the post office as he could get.

Nell Wing, who joined the small staff "just for a couple of months" in 1947 and retired as nonalcoholic archivist more than 35 years later, recalls that when she first came to work, the office was located at 415 Lexington Avenue, opposite Grand Central Station, in a somewhat dingy building that would become a mecca for thousands of A.A.s and other visitors. Today this A.A. landmark has been replaced by a high-rise office building.

The 1940s and '50s represented a period of tremendous flux and growth for the Fellowship, Nell recalls. "First came release of *The Saturday Evening Post* article about A.A. in 1941 that brought an avalanche of inquiries from alcoholics and their families. Then, in 1945, came the movie *Lost Weekend*, starring Ray Milland. It depicted alcoholism as a disease rather than a moral failing for the first time; by the following year, several major movie companies were knocking at A.A.'s door and membership was increasing rapidly."

During these years, A.A. expanded from the United States and Canada to Scotland, Ireland, England, Australia, Brazil, New Zealand and other countries around the globe. Meanwhile, the General Service Office, as the Alcoholic Foundation was now called, grew along with the Fellowship and its increasing need for services. Moved to successively larger offices, G.S.O. acquired a paid general manager and A.A. staff members who "ro-

tate" their A.A. assignments so that no one person could become identified as the possessor of special knowledge or power. The offices now occupy five floors of a building at 468 Park Avenue South, not far from the Empire State Building. Over 1,500 visitors from all over the world visit G.S.O. annually.

G.S.O. receives all its directives from the U.S./Canada General Service Conference, which has met every year since 1951. The approximately 135 members—area delegates, trustees (seven nonalcoholics and 14 A.A.s), A.A.W.S. and Grapevine directors, and G.S.O. and A.A. Grapevine staff members—are active throughout the year in matters concerning the Conference. A.A.'s only "governing body," it provides a forum for sharing A.A. experience and reveals the group conscience to the Fellowship. (A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., are separate corporations with their own boards, under the guidance of the trustees.)

Today at G.S.O., every staff assignment has necessarily expanded in scope with the rapid growth of the Fellowship, which as of January 1987 had a membership of more than one-and-a-half million recovering alcoholics. Since 1968, membership in the U.S. and Canada has tripled, with the greatest numerical increase occurring after 1980. The office totals 95 people, including administrative, supervisory, A.A. staff and supporting personnel.

The services provided by G.S.O. fall into about 17 categories, including: help with groups old and new and their problems; work with groups in treatment and correctional facilities; dissemination and coordination of public information at local and national levels; overseeing of the central U.S./Canada Archives; cooperation with the professional community; and coordination and support of the General Service Conference, International Conventions and Regional Forums.

G.S.O. also edits, publishes and distributes all A.A. Conference-approved literature and audiovisual materials, much of it available in other languages. Considering that more than five million copies of the English-language edition of the Big Book alone have been distributed and sold, the dissemination of all literature—running to a yearly total of about eight million pieces—can be seen as a vital and mammoth part of G.S.O.'s work.

With the expansion of A.A. beyond the U.S. and Canada, services similar to G.S.O. have been set up in other parts of the world. Since 1970, delegates have come together every two years at a World Service Meeting to share the experience, strength and hope of A.A.s everywhere. The ninth such meeting was held in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in 1986, with "Service Through Love and Humility" as its theme. The tenth will convene in New York City in October 1988.

While sometimes referred to as "A.A. world headquarters," G.S.O. is regarded as the senior service center only because of its longer experience. Each country's cen-

tral service office operates autonomously. Finland, for example, has a General Service Board but no Conference; and some other countries have A.A. members only on their board of trustees.

In each country where A.A. has flourished, it all began with one drunk carrying the message to another, as happened here in America. In Italy, for instance, A.A. was confined to one English-speaking group in Rome during the 1960s. Then, in the early '70s, a member of the Italian parliament got sober with the help of an A.A. member working through an interpreter. The parliamentarian twelfth stepped another Italian and together they spearheaded an effort to publish the Big Book in Italian. This resulted in a virtual explosion of more than 100 A.A. groups throughout Italy.

Similar heart-warming stories describe the birth of the Fellowship throughout the globe. Today A.A. has service structures, service offices and literature distribution centers in 34 countries.

Historically G.S.O. has helped A.A.s overseas to start publishing Conference-approved literature in their own country—either by footing the initial printing bill for say, the Big Book, with later reimbursement; or, as in the case of Great Britain in the 1950s, sending English-language copies from our own inventory to help them get along. As their sales mounted, the British repaid G.S.O. in full.

All A.A. literature is used freely, not only by members around the world but by other self-help organizations patterned on the A.A. Steps, Traditions, Concepts and Legacies. As Bill W. said, A.A.'s Steps are founded on basic principles that are "ancient and universal ones, the common property of mankind."

The Fellowship's world service programs are supported by voluntary contributions from the groups, by funds derived from publishing activities, and by individual contributions from members. No individual contribution from a member may exceed \$1000 a year; and any gifts or donations from nonmembers are returned with thanks. A.A. has heeded the admonishment of Mr. Rockefeller; and also the wisdom of St. Francis of Assisi, who back in the 13th century advocated a philosophy of self-support. This is the bedrock of A.A.'s Seventh Tradition and helps to safeguard our future.

Membership in A.A. is in no way contingent upon financial support of the Fellowship. We are members if we say we are. As it is clearly stated in Tradition One, "No A.A. can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled."

This explains why letters written in response to requests for help with individual or group problems invariably state: "While the majority experience of A.A. does seem to suggest (the following course of action), you of course are at perfect liberty to handle this matter any way you please. . . ."

## Tidings of Comfort and Joy

Celebration of the holidays takes many forms, many tongues around the globe. But in the broad community of A.A., it is the language of the heart that brings each of us comfort, joy and the knowledge that we don't have to drink again—we don't have to be alone again. The following "long-distance" messages are adapted from issues of the A.A. Grapevine dating back to 1960. They reflect with warmth and humor the universal gratitude that comes from sharing the greatest gift we have—our sobriety in the Fellowship.

*Christmas in Mexico*—"A few of us ex-drunks spend our winters with warm and friendly people in Guaymas, Mexico," writes K.W. "Our Spanish is limited, so some good-natured bilingual soul usually translates. These interpreters are not pros, but they get the meaning across.

"Last year I attended the first Christmas Eve alkathon held in the Guaymas area. One fellow told about a neighboring town that also was starting an alkathon and observed that they had two new men—but the translation came out that they had *dos pavos*, meaning 'two turkeys.' Someone asked if the A.A.s in question were having a dinner and eating the turkeys, whereupon the translator, Graciano, said he meant 'new men.' The light dawned and I said, 'Oh, you mean "pigeons."' Graciano looked relieved: '*¡Sí!* I know you call them some kind of bird.'

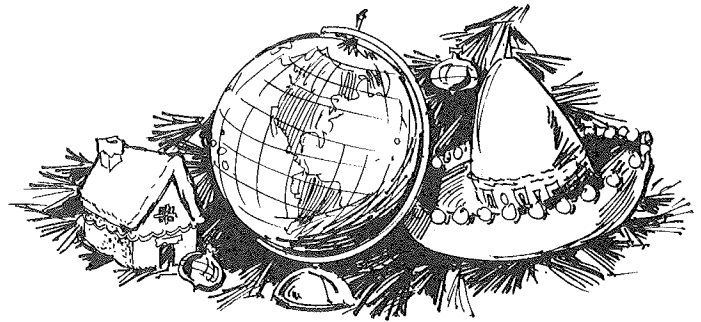
"During the meeting, several Al-Anon ladies prepared the traditional Christmas dinner out in an open courtyard behind the A.A. meeting room. At midnight we all sat down and ate tamales and hot jalapeño peppers and thanked the God of our understanding for letting us be sober and together on this holy night. *¡Feliz Navidad y un Próspero Año Nuevo!*"

*A Charlie Brown Tree Grows in Norway*—"Christmas was coming," J.H. writes from Stavanger, Norway, "and I had defiantly announced to everyone who would listen that I was bravely prepared to go into my annual depression. No, I wouldn't drink over being without my children at Christmas—I would suffer gallantly. A few weeks before the dreaded holiday, I got a phone call. A young A.A. from New York City was in Norway on temporary assignment; she was lonely and needed a meeting and an American woman to talk to. She had never before been so far from home or her A.A. group.

"Would she like to come for Christmas dinner? Attend a scheduled meeting to be held no matter how few attended? Would she! She was relieved, reassured—and I was ecstatic. Meanwhile, I had not planned to have a tree. Why should I? Bah, humbug!

"Our sudden guest found a 'Charlie Brown' tree (merry, scraggly, willful) at a bus stop and hauled it

right into our living room. My husband sawed off a limb here and nailed it there, with magnificent results. We had turkey and trimmings, cranberry juice cocktail, a gingerbread house and lots of laughter. My Higher Power had done it again. *God Jul! God Nyttar!*"



*What to do in Hawaii in case of a Christmas?*—"I am a 'tutu lady.' That's a Hawaiian term of respect for grandparents and other elderly people. Just before Christmas (in 1959, before Hawaii attained statehood), I sank into my yearly blue funk, but this time I didn't drink. I dressed in my best muu-muu and *lauhala* (wide straw hat), and set off to get help from a couple of my friends in A.A.

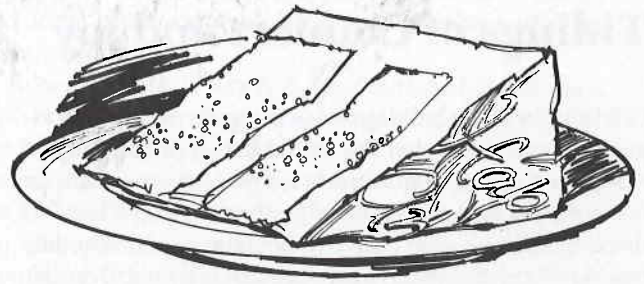
"The first friend I visited, a Navy officer's wife with three children, shared with me freely: 'I am not particularly afraid of the holiday season, but it does present problems—a lot of rushing around to social functions, shopping and general confusion. My duties and chores look like mountains to me. Also, there seems to be more drinking at Christmas than at any other time of the year. I try to take each day as just another 24 hours in A.A.; I step up attendance at meetings as insurance against the season's upsets; I pray more, particularly when trying situations arise; and I try to remember to say "please" in the morning and "thank you" at night.'

"Feeling somewhat better, I then lunched with another friend, a health agency executive who confided, 'I look forward to the holidays as a time to do something for others instead of drinking. After ten sober Christmases, I never think of any other kind. There can't be any other kind if I continue to practice these principles . . .'

"After visiting my A.A. friends, I returned home feeling like the *tutu* lady I am, sober and centered, and re-read Charles Dickens' classic, *A Christmas Carol*. Scrooge's nephew sums up the spirit of the season most aptly when he says, 'I have always thought of Christmas time . . . apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin . . . as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely. . . .

And, therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say “God bless it!” yes, and as Tiny Tim observes, ‘God bless us every one!’ *Mele Kalikimaka, Hauoli Makahiki Hou!!*”

**Note:** Mexican story, 12/77 Gv; Norwegian, 12/82; Hawaiian, 12/60.



## Expressing Gratitude Is A ‘Piece of Cake’ With the A.A. Birthday Plan

Every A.A. who sticks around is blessed with two birthdays—our natal day and the anniversary of our first 24 hours of sobriety in the Fellowship. We mark the latter in a variety of ways, from qualifying at a meeting to celebrating at our home group to setting aside some private moments for reflection and gratitude. But there is yet another way to celebrate that you may not know about—the A.A. Birthday Plan.

It began back in Oklahoma City in 1954. While attending a state meeting, the late Ab A., then a delegate (Panel 3) from Tulsa, was “inspired” by fellow A.A. Ted R., who “had a great idea”: that members might like to celebrate their sobriety by “giving it away” on their A.A. birthday to the General Service Office—a dollar for each year of sobriety.

Ab “checked out the suggestion with some of the ‘old boys’ who had passed through A.A.” and they were interested in the new “Birthday Plan,” which Ab described as follows: “The idea is that you talk about this in your own group. However, the group doesn’t vote on whether to accept the Plan—that’s an individual, voluntary thing.”

As Ab noted, “The group can vote to appoint a birthday person chairperson. On the first day of May, say, the birthday person lists all the members celebrating their A.A. birthday that month, then studies the Service Handbook and the Third Legacy Manual (today combined in *The A.A. Service Manual*) long enough to prepare a 15-minute talk. This will educate newcomers about the importance of world service. The birthday person talks to John and Mary . . . John and Mary tell Bill and Susie about this new way of doing Twelfth Step work . . . and you’ll be surprised at the results.”

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Ab and his friends, the results were spectacular. The Birthday Plan took hold quickly in Oklahoma, where contributions to G.S.O. nearly doubled inside the first year. The Plan spread

across the United States and Canada, and today is followed by A.A.s worldwide.

As Ab talked up the Birthday Plan around the country, he was especially mindful of oldtimers “who are no longer active. If we can get these people to make their birthday contribution, it is a habit they won’t forget—one that will remind them about the most important day of their lives.”

Under the Birthday Plan, he said, “We do not write letters reminding people who have given to give again. But when the next year’s anniversary rolls around, we follow up, and use the opportunity to do some one-to-one Twelfth Step work. I believe that it is just as important to reach the oldtimer as it is to save the last person who comes through the door.”

Were Ab alive today, he would doubtless be pleased to know that the Birthday Plan is flourishing, and has grown to include other A.A. entities as well. But he might also urge A.A.s on to greater effort, saying as he did in 1956 at the state meeting in Great Bend, Kansas: “I want you to remember how this inspiration came to me . . . by talking to older members, and to new ones too. They want to do something; they want to be a part of this Fellowship; they feel when they make a little investment that they are a part of it. And they are!”

If you would like to participate in the Birthday Plan, here’s how: Commemorate your A.A. birthday by sending \$1.00 for each year of your sobriety to the General Service Office, your intergroup/central office or area committee. This is your individual expression of gratitude. However, your group will be credited as well if you so request (be sure to give the group’s name and identification number).

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## Spiritual Tapes from the Grapevine

Are you “just looking,” or seeking? That’s the question raised by the first article on a new set of Grapevine tapes. Appropriately, the tape is titled “Pathways to Spirituality,” and along with its companion, “Maintaining Spirituality,” the cassette contains personal experience

articles for A.A. seekers along the spiritual path of the A.A. program.

"Pathways" traces the process of "coming to believe," and includes the whole spectrum of spiritual experience, from A.A.s with a religious orientation to agnostics and atheists. "Maintaining" is about the spiritual tools of the program, concentrating on the Steps and sharing other ways of "maintaining our spiritual condition."

Tapes are available from The Grapevine, Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Cost (pre-paid): \$5.50 each; two or more, \$5.00 each.

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## New from G.S.O.

- "Young People and A.A."—28-minute film in which young A.A. members share their experiences; closed captions for the hearing impaired. ½" videocassette (S-8) \$15.00; 16mm print (US-10) \$150, weekly rental (UO-10) \$35.
- "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell"—17-minute film based on material in the pamphlet of the same name; closed captions for the hearing impaired. ½" videocassette (S-11) \$15; 16mm print (US-13) \$100, weekly rental (UO-13) \$35.
- "Memo to an Inmate" (P-9)—revised version, 20¢.
- "The A.A. Member" (P-48)—revised; pamphlet 10¢, table-top display (M-13) \$14.
- "Supporting the A.A. Support System" (F-3)—revised; no charge.
- A.A. Guidelines on Finance (MG-15)—shared experiences on financial matters; question and answer format. Ten copies or less free; additional copies 10¢ each.
- "Un Principiante Pregunta" (SS-24)—"A Newcomer Asks" in Spanish, 10¢.
- "¿Hay un Alcohólico en su Vida?" (SS-30)—"Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life" in Spanish, 15¢.
- *Manual de Servicios de A.A./Doce Conceptos Para el Servicio Mundial* (SS-42)—Spanish translations of *A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*. Updated to reflect actions through 1987, \$2.50.

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## A.A.W.S./Intergroup Seminar

The first A.A.W.S./Intergroup Seminar, held in Chicago, September 1986, was a grand success—leaving all who attended eager for more communication with each other.

Word spread, and the second seminar, in Los Angeles, California, September 18-20, found 136 representatives from intergroups and central offices in the U.S. and Canada, a trustee of the General Service Board, three

general service delegates and eight employees from the Grapevine and General Service Office in attendance.

The Los Angeles Central Office hosted the seminar and introductory remarks were given by David H., executive secretary of the L.A. Central Office, and Al H., general service delegate, Southern California. Joe P., Southeast regional trustee and chairperson of the A.A.W.S. board, chaired the general sessions.

As the first seminar had shown a desire on the part of attendees to simply talk with each other—presentations and discussions gave way to a program of workshops. Topics (as they related to intergroup/central offices) included: management practices, literature pricing and distribution, responding to group problems, the Seventh Tradition, and the relationship between central offices and General Service. Other activities of the seminar were a "Red Ball" A.A. meeting Friday evening, a Saturday night banquet and workshop report-backs and open sharing sessions.

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## Treatment Facilities

### Shared Experience From Successful Contact Sponsorship Programs

In response to a 1986 General Service Conference recommendation for a study by the trustees' Committee on Treatment Facilities on ways to develop temporary contact programs for prospective newcomers, more than two thousand letters were sent out to representatives of the appropriate A.A. entities concerned with such programs in the U.S. and Canada. From treatment facility, institutions, H&I and C.P.C. committee members to General Service Conference delegates, respondents were asked to share their experience—successful, as well as unsuccessful—in setting up viable temporary contact programs to ease that most difficult phase of the newcomers's road to recovery: leaving the facility and making a real and, hopefully, ongoing connection with one or several local A.A. groups.

While the programs the respondents described varied in size, scope, method, degree of participation and interest, the ones that worked well did so because: there was ongoing personal contact with the treatment facility; and there was consistent follow-through on commitments to the facilities and to the patients.

Most programs are channeled through intergroup or central offices, treatment, institutions or C.P.C. commit-

tees. These committees coordinate the A.A. meetings that are brought into facilities. Many A.A.s are willing to list their names and phone numbers on Twelfth Step lists, to be made available to the treatment facilities upon request. Sometimes, if the intergroup has referred an individual to a detox unit, temporary contact is set up for the individual upon discharge.

In some areas the individual A.A. groups set up an A.A. meeting in a treatment facility, although in most cases it proves more effective if the groups work through a standing committee.

One way to initiate contact with a treatment facility is to send a letter from the central office or area committee, stating how A.A. would like to cooperate with the facility and describing the temporary contact service the committee would like to provide. It is important to stress the confidentiality of the contacts' names and telephone numbers when informing the facility of the temporary contact program. It is also important to follow up the letter with a visit to the facility's directorship or other personnel, during which the A.A. Steps and Traditions are explained and a method established for hooking up about-to-be-released clients with interim A.A. contacts in the client's home area. Many committees, if they already take regular A.A. meetings to the facility, leave beginner's kits and a Request for Outside Temporary Contact form at the meeting place, simultaneously providing the facility personnel with the names, telephone numbers and zip codes (for more exact area connection) of interim contacts.

Written guidelines for the volunteering temporary contacts are proving to be useful among numerous groups, although some respondents reported success with their temporary contact programs as normal offshoots of their members' Twelfth Step work. A typical guideline to temporary contacts urges volunteers to have a "comfortable, stable sobriety, preferably for a year or more," to make direct personal contact with a patient while he or she is still at the treatment center (by phone, a visit or attending a meeting together), and to make every effort to attend a meeting with the newcomer on the day of his/her release from treatment. Thereafter, the temporary contact is urged to get the patient to a variety of different meetings, and to introduce him/her to other A.A.s, especially to members with similar back grounds and interests. It is suggested that the temporary contact familiarize the new member with A.A. literature, provide a meeting schedule, and always, to urge the newcomer to get a permanent sponsor in the near future.

Some committees find it useful to spell out to their temporary contacts some Dos and Don'ts: *do* keep the general conversation close to A.A.-related matters; *don't* become involved in discussions about the newcomer's treatment or confinement—A.A.s have no opinion about

outside issues; *do* try to be affable, friendly, interested—you may be the first outside A.A. contact that the person meets.

One group offers newcomers at each meeting a small temporary contact card with room for three names, phone numbers, a brief description of what a temporary contact is and the Serenity Prayer. Another group contacts a regular meeting on the psych ward of a general hospital, where volunteers act as temporary contacts for the released patients.

Some of the problems shared—from both successful and unsuccessful programs—were concerned with: 1) the term "sponsor"; "temporary contact" seems to work better; 2) individuals confined in a treatment facility of one A.A. district who reside in another A.A. district, requiring coordination of procedures between the two districts; 3) offering a temporary contact program *before* actually recruiting the temporary contact; 4) making certain that the volunteers who sign up to serve as temporary contacts understand the necessity of following through.

In summarizing, some suggestions that bear noting: some committee workers leave their own name and number with the facility staff, with the prior understanding that the information be given to any released clients requesting it; some leave copies of meetings lists with their phone numbers on them, to be given to the clients upon release; some just give the name of their home group when they speak or chair a meeting at a facility; emphasize to all clients that they attend A.A. meetings on their first day of release; distribute flyers announcing the temporary contact program; have a Bridge the Gap Workshop at the facility; avoid promising a program that hasn't been put together yet. A good motto: Keep it simple, keep it small, aim to be effective, then build.

**Note:** A more detailed version of this article is available as a service piece; free of charge from the General Service Office.

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## Correctional Facilities

### 'Memo to an Inmate' Revised

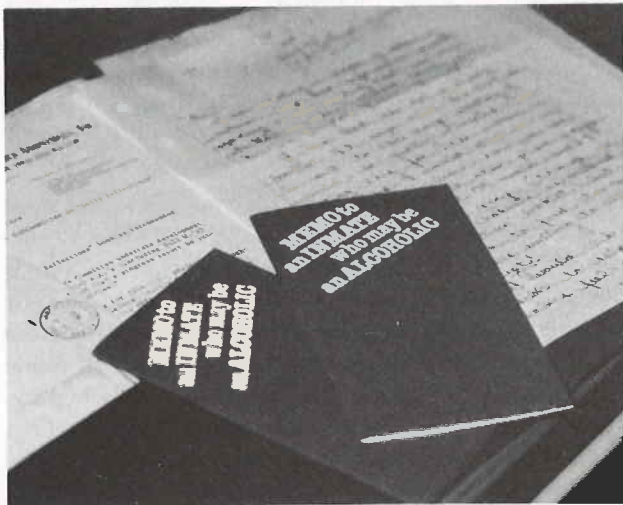
Carrying the A.A. message into prisons isn't really a new idea, and neither is the "new" pamphlet "Memo to an Inmate Who May Be an Alcoholic." Recently revised to



more effectively reach today's prison population, this pamphlet has been geared toward a seventh-grade reading level, and lays out the A.A. program under four different headings: "What It Was Like," "There Was An Answer," "How It Works," and a collection of seven personal stories written by inmates.

Nearly two years ago, in the course of evaluating existing A.A. material aimed at the large prison population, the trustees' Committee on Correctional Facilities determined that while "Memo to an Inmate" certainly did fill a need, it could benefit from updating and being made more readable. It was determined that a seventh-grade reading level would be more appropriate than the more complicated original version, and a series of drafts were submitted to the committee and, eventually, to the 1987 General Service Conference for approval.

One story from the original version was dropped, while two more — both by women — were added to give a more rounded base of identification (there were *no* stories by women in the original). The pamphlet also includes a list of twenty questions (updated from the original) to help inmates focus on the use (or abuse) of al-



cohol in their lives, and lists fourteen points under the heading "What A.A. Does *Not* Do."

The size has been retained (6" x 3½" — to discreetly fit in an inmate's pocket) — but there is a new bright-green, coated-stock cover. Available from G.S.O., 20¢.

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## Expressions of Gratitude from Behind the Walls

Gratitude, a year-round feeling for most A.A.s, has a tendency to spread during the holiday season. The Correctional Facilities desk received the following letter from

A.A. member Michael R., chairperson of the Brooklyn CCC: "We at the Brooklyn Correctional Center thank you very much for the books and pamphlets." He was particularly grateful, he said, because earlier that day, "my father passed away at the early age of 53, from alcoholism. He was sober for two years, but from all the abuse of alcohol, through the years, his liver and kidneys failed him. He will be greatly missed. I just wish he could have worked the program earlier in his life because he would probably still be here. But I know life goes on and I must keep my sobriety. So thank you very much. Well, today is a very good day for me. Because today makes it a year I have been sober and I owe it all to A.A. Also, I read your letter to the whole group and they are all very thankful."

Literature carries the message, always, everywhere — even behind walls. From a department of corrections probation officer in Trenton, New Jersey, comes the note: "I've just received the collection of literature you sent. Believe me, this material will be put to good use. Some of these parolees pretend they have things under control, but whenever pamphlets like these are left in the waiting room they eventually disappear."

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## P.I.

### Twelfth Stepping through P.I. Activities

From North Hollywood, California, an oldtimer nicknamed "Teet," who once served as chairperson of the Public Information Committee at the Los Angeles Central Office, writes to share the "emotional rewards" he experienced when sending young speakers into classrooms to talk about sobriety in the Fellowship:

- A high school drop-out named Ann, who had taken up waitressing in sobriety, was asked to respond to a request from a sorority house at a large university. The sorority wanted to hear someone speak about A.A. "I hope they'll identify with a girl who never got a high school diploma," Ann said warily beforehand. When asked the next day how her talk had gone, Ann said: "Great. Three of those sorority girls asked me to take them to a meeting."
- Another A.A. volunteer, Edith, was returning to her car after speaking to a high school class, when she noticed three young students following her. Edith stopped and asked the three if they thought they had a drinking problem. "Oh, we know we're alcoholics," one of them replied. "In fact, we belong to A.A. We just want to know how we can volunteer to speak to students like you're doing."

- Constance, still another volunteer, was about to leave the university class session at which she had just spoken when the teacher, who had waited for all of the students to leave, called out to her. "After hearing you, I'm sure I'm an alcoholic. Will you help me?" None of the students had come over to talk to Constance, but she became the teacher's sponsor on the spot.
- Weldon, a volunteer who was about to address a class of college graduate students, was stopped by their irate professor before he'd had a chance to go into his talk. What had infuriated the professor was Weldon's statement that: "Statistics tell us that ten percent of any gathering are likely to be alcoholics. Well, I'm one of the forty in this room. I wonder where the other three are." Testily cutting in, the professor said: "You are insulting these highly intelligent men and women with a blatant accusation." He asked the A.A. to leave and, seeing no way out, Weldon prepared to do so. Just then three students, one by one, raised their hands, each saying, "I'm a recovering alcoholic." "Thank you," Weldon answered. "That's the ten percent. May I speak?" The professor could not refuse.

## C.P.C.

### Your Company EAP— An Opportunity for Service

Rick S., of the Ottawa-Rideau District C.P.C. Committee, sent in suggestions that his area has found useful in carrying the message to EAP (Employee Assistance Program) counselors and coordinators:

Many A.A.s are ready and willing to make Twelfth-Step calls, but when the majority of requests must filter through a single phone at the intergroup office, or depend on personal acquaintances, the opportunities to reach the still-suffering alcoholic can be few and far between.

For some A.A.s, particularly those who work for large corporations or government agencies, a valuable source of Twelfth-Step contacts could be your company Employee Assistance Program (EAP). As the name implies, these departments exist to assist employees having problems which may be affecting their work. They are run by counselors or referral agents, whose job it is to help the employee identify the problem and to refer the employee to an appropriate source of help. A significant portion of an EAP workload can deal with alcohol problems.

While a referral can be made simply by requesting the employee to call A.A., many counselors prefer to work

with a reliable A.A. contact who will talk with the employee and perhaps take them to their first meeting or two. Company management will frequently assist by granting the A.A. member time off from regular duties on those occasions where meetings with "problem employees" must take place during working hours, usually in the counselor's office. This relationship is kept confidential.

Some suggested guidelines:

- Get to know your EAP professional. The counselor needs the opportunity to get to know you as a person who can be trusted, particularly concerning the aspect of confidentiality. Needless to say, EAP contacts must be treated with the same confidentiality as all A.A. matters of the same nature.
- Cooperate, don't dictate. The counselor is a professional who must work under certain guidelines. A.A. and the still-suffering alcoholic are best served when you adopt an attitude of flexibility and cooperation. Don't try to tell the counselor how to do his or her job.
- Let your C.P.C. committee know what you are doing. It may well be that a degree of A.A./EAP cooperation already exists, and your C.P.C. representative can then introduce you to the counselor. If no prior contact has been made, C.P.C./P.I. can usually provide advice and material to make the initial contact easier. This step will also prevent a situation where you and the committee both initiate contact, thereby confusing or alienating the counselor.
- Realize the element of risk. The counselor, and most people you will be asked to help, will need to know who you are. The surrender of your anonymity at this level is not at odds with the A.A. Traditions, providing your name is not advertised to the company at large. There is a risk that an employee, once contact has been made will, advertently or inadvertently, break your anonymity. This risk, weighed against the opportunity to help another alcoholic, is an individual decision not to be taken lightly, but experience has shown the risk to be small.
- Be patient. You may not receive an immediate response to your offer of help. The counselor can not arrange a meeting between you and the employee unless the employee consents. Some will prefer to call A.A. themselves or seek alternate resources of help. An occasional check with the counselor during the year will ensure you are not forgotten. It serves no one to make a pest of yourself.

First Things First. Your employer may appreciate your assistance to the EAP, but that was not what you were hired to do. If care is taken to ensure that your job does not suffer from your efforts to help, a long and mutually-respected relationship, in which everyone benefits, is assured.

## 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 celebrations 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.

### Calendar of Events

#### December

- 4-6 — *Little Rock, Arkansas.* Southwest Regional Forum. Write: Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 4-6 — *Jacksonville Beach, Florida.* 12th N. Florida/S. Georgia Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 51134, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
- 4-6 — *Del Rio, Texas.* Border Conf. Write: Ch., Box 395, Del Rio, TX 78841
- 11-12 — *Sikeston, Missouri.* Seventh Five Corners Conv. Write: Ch., 205 North Jackson, Kennett, MO 63857
- 18-20 — *Seoul, Korea.* National Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 154, 121st Evac. Hosp., APO, San Francisco, CA 96301
- 23-26 — *Woodbridge, Virginia.* Alkathon '87. Write: Ch., 3109 Tecumseh Ct., Woodbridge, VA 22192
- 24-25 — *Odessa, Texas.* Annual Xmas Alkathon. Write: Ch., 3700 Merrill, Odessa, TX 79764
- 26-27 — *Neosho, Missouri.* Winter Holiday VII. Write: Treas., 322 St. John, Neosho, MO 64850

31-January 1 — *San Diego, California.* New Year's Alkathon. Write: Ch., Box 34002, San Diego, CA 92103-0760

#### January

- 8-10 — *Jamestown, North Dakota.* Seventh Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1306, Jamestown, ND 58702
- 14-17 — *Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.* 14th Annual Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 236, St. James P.O., Winnipeg, R3S 3R4
- 15-17 — *Hilton Head, South Carolina.* Eighth Annual Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938
- 22-24 — *Midland, Texas.* 18th Annual Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3834, Midland, TX 79702
- 24-26 — *Palestine, Texas.* Yellow Rose Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1470, Cleveland, TX 77327
- 29-31 — *Anaheim, California.* 16th All-California Young People's Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 775, Placentia, CA 92670
- 29-31 — *Syracuse, New York.* Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Sec., Box 871, Syracuse, NY 13205

#### February

- 5-7 — *Mission, Kansas.* Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1281, Mission, KS 66222
- 11-14 — *St. Petersburg, Florida.* Fourth Annual Mid-Winter Big Book Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 1682, St. Petersburg, FL 33731
- 12-14 — *El Paso, Texas.* 26th Jamboree. Write: Sec., Box 1405, El Paso, TX 79948
- 12-14 — *Palmerston North, New Zealand.* 25th National Conv. Write: Ch., Box 683, Gisborne, New Zealand
- 12-14 — *North Little Rock, Arkansas.* Sixth Annual Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Ch., Box 55269, Little Rock, AR 72205
- 19-21 — *Owensbury, Kentucky.* 37th State Conv. Write: Ch., 302 E. Third St., Owensboro, KY 42301
- 26-28 — *Toronto, Ontario, Canada.* 38th Ontario Regional Conf. Write: Ch., 207 Queen's Quay W., Box 132, Toronto, Ontario M5J 5855

### Planning a February, March or April 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) \_\_\_\_\_

