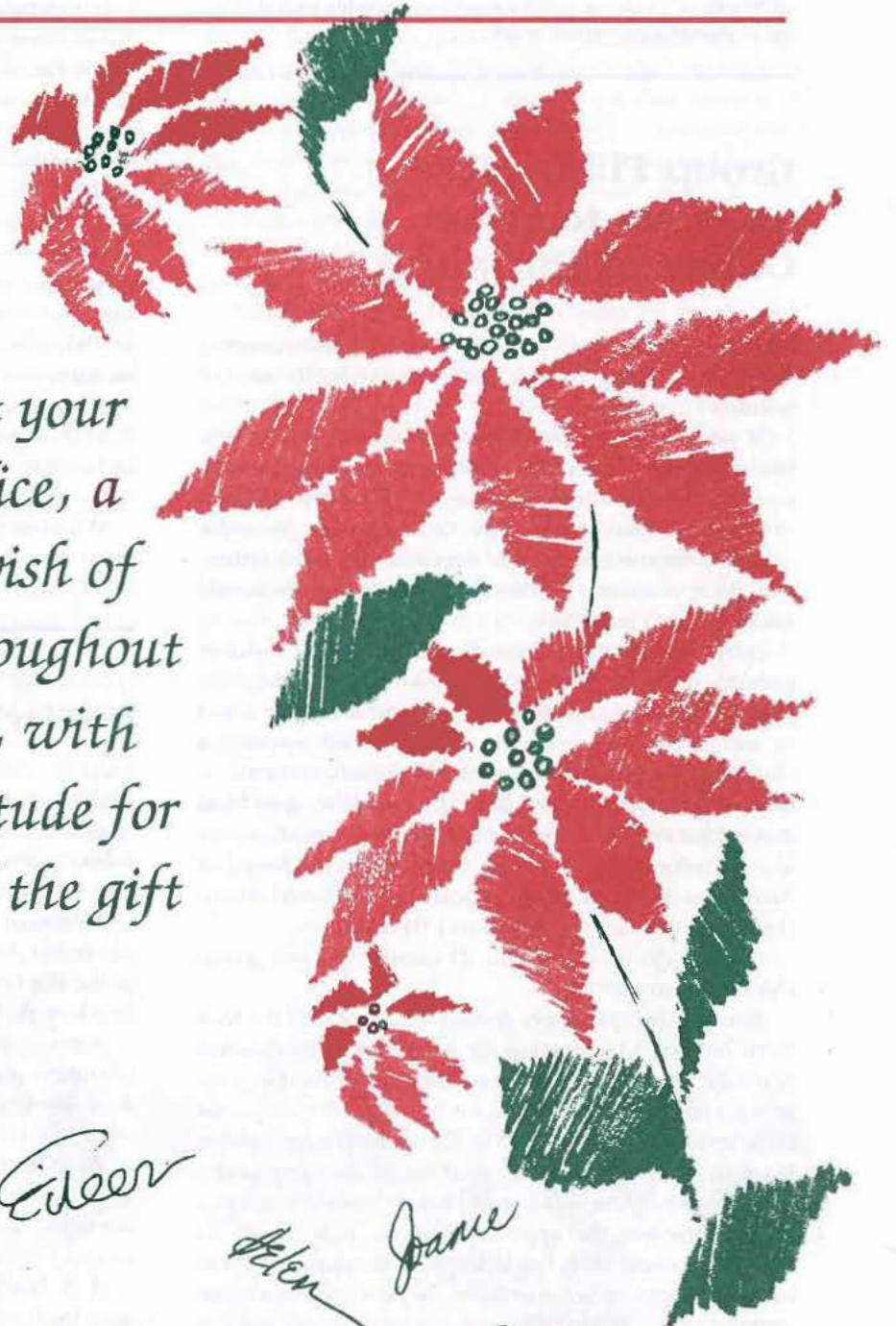


BOX 4|5|9

News and Notes From the General Service Office of A.A.[®]

VOL. 39, NO. 6 / HOLIDAY ISSUE 1993

*From all of us at your
General Service Office, a
warm and sincere wish of
Love and Peace throughout
the Holiday Season, with
a heart full of gratitude for
our Fellowship and the gift
of a sober life.*



*Danny
Richard
Susan
Sarah
John
Helen
Jane
Pat
Neline*

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Group Finances: Answers to Some Common Questions

How do you go about opening a group bank account? Are contributions to A.A. tax deductible? Is an "ID number" needed?

If you're new to group finances and find it a little like flying blind, don't be discouraged. There are answers to the questions you may have—many of them simply explained in the A.A. Guidelines on Finances available for the asking from the General Service Office. Following are some of those that are most frequently asked by A.A. members:

Q: If we open a group bank account, are we required to have an ID number? If so, can we use G.S.O.'s?

A: More and more often, A.A. groups are being asked to supply an ID number to a bank when opening a checking or savings account, whether or not it is interest-bearing. According to G.S.O.'s outside auditors, no local A.A. organization can use the tax-exempt status or identification number of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. Local entities should obtain their own tax-exempt status and ID numbers.

Q. How do we obtain an ID number for our group checking account?

Sharing its experience, one area advises that the SS-4 form headed "Application for Employer Identification Number" is needed to open a checking account in your group's name. To obtain the form, call your local Social Security office or IRS office. You'll find the phone number listed in the "blue pages" of your phone directory under *Government Offices—U.S.* and broken down by towns.

In filling out the application form, it is suggested that you consult with the IRS or a professional, such as an accountant or tax specialist. Be sure to include the signature of a group officer or member where such is asked for. Date the form, list a phone number, and mail to the IRS Center listed for your area. In time, the ID number will be mailed to the address shown on the SS-4 form.

Q: Are contributions to A.A. tax-deductible?

A: Contributions to an A.A. group, central office or intergroup are tax-deductible only if the entity is a qualified charitable organization as determined by the Internal Revenue Service. Contributions made directly to the General Service Board of A.A. are deductible because the board qualifies under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Importantly, the Code has no provision under which A.A.'s General Service Board could apply for tax-exempt status for *all groups* and other A.A. *entities*, since each of these is autonomous in financial matters, as in all other ways.

Donations at A.A. groups are not deductible unless the group has filed the proper application for the exempt status (Form 1023) with its local IRS office and has obtained a ruling that the organization is tax-exempt. A.A. experience has shown that some tax examiners may make exceptions if proof of contribution is presented, but this is strictly up to the individual tax examiner.

Experience also has indicated that travel expenses to A.A. conventions, as well as registration fees, are not deductible because the government does not consider them to be "donations."

When it comes to group finances, actual practices often vary. So, if your group has found solutions it would like to share, please let us hear from you.

Holiday Gift Ideas

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

Although each A.A. member owns our basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the new abridged pocket version of the Big Book (B-35, \$4.00) is a wonderful gift for the holidays, A.A. anniversaries and other special occasions.

Some members find that *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* and "Pass It On," biographies of our co-founders, are books that are not in every A.A.'s library and would be most welcome. The same is true of *The Language of the Heart*, a book of Bill W.'s writings, published by the A.A. Grapevine. And, of course, for years, A.A. members have been solving gift-giving problems by sending friends a Grapevine subscription.

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

A Time of Giving, of Sharing, of Gratitude

This year marks the Fellowship's 58th Holiday Season—beginning with Thanksgiving, through the Festival of Lights that is celebrated at Hanukkah, and on to Christmas and New Year's Eve. For a continuously growing society of two million members in 141 countries, it's hard to imagine what it must have been like that very first Christmas in 1935. A December 1952 issue of the Grapevine brought together some reminiscences: "The first Christmas for A.A. was the depression year of 1935. There were three old timers to mark it . . . hardly a dozen newcomers to share it with them. In Akron, Dr. Bob and Bill D. [A.A. number three] were going on their second six months. Four recruits had four months to two months. In New York, Bill W. had thirteen months since his last drink, seven months since his historic trip to Akron and the start of A.A.

"In Akron, the six gathered with their families at Dr. Bob's. There was no ceremony . . . no exchange of presents. The Twelve Steps had not yet been formulated. The Big Book was only a vague stirring that would not even be in manuscript until three more Christmases had been achieved. But there was joy that this most dangerous of times for the alcoholic had arrived . . . and twenty-four hours by twenty-four hours was being mastered."

Bill W., in 1952, remembered only a quiet day in New York that first Christmas—there were so few members. Five years later, there was a place to celebrate Christmas—the first clubhouse. They called it the 24th Street Club. . . . There is a St. Nicholas story—literally—that goes with it. Just one hundred years before, in 1840, the building was erected at 334½ West 24th Street, the property of a family named Moore. They were large

landowners in Manhattan's Chelsea section. Driving across the snow-covered lawn one day, Dr. Clement Clarke Moore began to compose his immortal gift to children of all ages, with the opening words, " 'Twas the night before Christmas. . . . "

The Grapevine article, written as A.A. entered its 17th Holiday Season, quotes one of the members at that first Akron Christmas. "There were thanks that we had come this far. However, I am certain that there was still considerable fear and trembling . . . not fear that this new way would not work, but doubt and uncertainty that we would be able to hold on to it. We remembered our many failures and thanked God for what he had already granted us and prayed sincerely for continued strength."

Today, although the holidays may be lonely and uncomfortable times for many A.A.s, there is no longer as much "fear and trembling." For most, as one member said, "Every day I don't drink is a holiday." Each day of the holiday season is still only 24 hours long. One A.A. reminded us a couple of years back, "Eight of those hours can be disposed of easily by taking the doctor's advice about sleeping. So that leaves only 16 hours to worry about at a time, and no one who knows anything about horse trading would trade 16 hours for a lifetime of sobriety. Furthermore, a good share of those 16 hours can be filled with A.A. friends and A.A. talk and A.A. thoughts." That, in fact, is what most of us do, or learn to do, pretty early in sobriety, because that very sharing keeps us sober.

Treatment facilities are not exactly brimming with bubbling good cheer at this time of year. Quite a few A.A.s, especially those who sobered up around holiday





time in a treatment facility, remember all too vividly what a scary, baffling—as well as tentatively hopeful—time it was. So many sober A.A.s leave their homes or friends' celebrations for a few hours to share their hope and gratitude with brand new members in the facilities.

Every December, brightly-colored decorations go up in A.A. meeting rooms, and thousands upon thousands hang out at marathon meetings. Usually these are held from noon on Christmas Eve, continuing through the night and into Christmas Day. Interspersed with a back-to-back schedule of speakers are breaks for holiday eating and reveling. Quite often, these marathon meetings are repeated by the groups on New Year's Eve, again running through the night and into New Year's Day. Whether small and simple or large and lavish, sober alcoholics pour in to celebrate the season together in sobriety.

One group's members, in Quebec, get together every December in a round robin to recall his or her first Christmas without alcohol. It's a great way to transmit

to each other, and to newcomers in the group, how "A.A. gave us a new life," one of the group's members wrote us. "It's always a message of hope."

And this message of gratitude is spelled out every year in a variety of seasonal greetings received at G.S.O. from all corners of the globe. Thousands of heartfelt messages, written on colorful cards come pouring in, in Spanish, French, Japanese, Norwegian, Russian or Bulgarian (to name a few), all of them expressing the shared good news: "Happy Holidays, and thank you for my sobriety."

SERVICES AT G.S.O.

Regional Forums: A.A.'s Long-time Communication Link

Each year, thousands of A.A.s attend Regional Forums—weekend sessions, usually four a year—throughout the U.S. and Canada. These informational exchanges between G.S.O. and Grapevine staff and General Service Board trustees, Grapevine and A.A.W.S. directors, and area, district and local A.A. service workers, are coordinated by the G.S.O. staff member who serves on the Regional Forums assignment.

Richard B., who just rotated off the assignment, says that one or more Regional Forums is constantly in the works. Here's how any one of them takes shape: At the annual General Service Conference, delegates of a given region meet for lunch and decide which area (and city) will host the scheduled Forum. Several months prior to the Forum's opening date, the staff member gets in touch with the area delegate, as well as the host contact, usually a past delegate who currently lives near the selected hotel.

The staff member works hand-in-hand with the host committee, as well as the hotel administration, to make sure that all the requirements for meetings, workshops, sharing sessions, coffee breaks and other details are met. "This assignment, probably more than any other staff position," says Richard, "depends on a number of people to make it work." Ivelisse Rivera, for example, the non-A.A. staff assistant, to name just one, has attended eight Forums, and is actively involved from the beginning in Forum preparations. These include the mailing of several thousand preregistration forms, shipment of about 15 boxes of display literature and archives material, and follow-up correspondence. The mail room, EDP, purchasing, accounting, support services and special projects departments also play important roles.

Since 1975, a total of 79 Forums have been held in the Fellowship's eight regions (Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, East Central, West Central, Pacific, Eastern and Western Canada). Regional Forums were suggested originally by the late Dr. Jack Norris, then a trustee of the General Service Board (Class A, nonalcoholic), who envisioned the need for continuing dialogue between the board and A.A. members.

All Forums follow the same format, but each one has its own dynamism and flavor. The number of participants range from 200 to 900, depending on the region's size. Interestingly, "two-thirds to three-quarters of those present are attending a Forum for the first time," Richard says. Each Forum's agenda includes presentations and a dozen workshops, and there's always a contingent of about ten individuals from G.S.O.; four staff members and six A.A.W.S., Grapevine and General Service Board members. This group gives presentations on all aspects of office assignments and Grapevine and A.A.W.S. services. "The idea is to have communication between all levels of service in the Fellowship, to understand, and to try to break down the idea that there's some vague 'they' out there running A.A.," Richard explains.

Forums run from Friday evening to Sunday noon, and topics are a mix of standard ones—typically, "The Role and Responsibilities of G.S.R.s and D.C.M.s," "The Home Group," or "How to Serve on an Area Committee." In the last eight months, however, Richard says, "topics have been moving away from those dealing with the general service structure, with more talk about reaching the wet drunk," he adds, "or how to keep Twelfth Step work alive and well in light of treatment facility closings. Back-to-basics ideas have dominated many workshop themes in the last several months."

When the weekend of sharing is finished, all of the presentations, report-backs, Ask-It-Basket questions and sharing sessions are condensed into a report by the staff member and sent to all A.A.s who registered for the Forum.

The two-way communication at the core of each Forum is what has formed the most rewarding aspect of his assignment, Richard reports. "If we at G.S.O. don't watch it, we can get removed from the Fellowship. We have a job to do and we're doing it the best way we know how, but we also need to be out there and reminded who we are and why we're here—the future of the Fellowship rests with all of us."

Just as importantly, as staff and board members reach out to inform, ideas and shared experience from the Fellowship constantly flow back to G.S.O. "Every time we come back from a Forum, the Wednesday staff meeting is filled with enthusiastic sharing about the weekend," Richard says. "It's a constant, two-way communication; the staff and board members not only hear what's being said out there—they're really listening."

In 1994 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *Western Canada*—February 4–6: Delta Bessborough, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
 - *Pacific Region (Special Forum)*—February 18–21: Hawaii
 - *Pacific*—June 17–19: Red Lion, Riverside, Boise, Idaho
 - *Eastern Canada*—September 16–18: Valhalla Inn, Thunder Bay, Ontario
 - *Southeast*—December 2–4: Royal d'Iberville Hotel, Biloxi, Mississippi
-

Are A.A.s Reading? If So, What?

The answer to the above is that members *are* reading, and they're reading a lot of A.A. literature. But therein lies a conundrum because, even as they seem to be reading more, it all adds up to less.

A random check of intergroups and central offices shows that A.A. literature sales are up in three out of six of those called by *Box 4-5-9*, while a fourth registers only a small dip in revenues, a fifth has stayed even and only one reports a significant decline. Yet, according to figures compiled by A.A. World Services, Inc., sales of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Big Book) and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* have trended downward for the past three years and projections indicate the decline is expected to continue into 1994.

In presenting the A.A.W.S. annual finance report to the 1993 General Service Conference, Class B (alcoholic) trustee and former A.A.W.S. director Greg M. asked, "Does this trend reflect a decreasing growth in the A.A. membership? An economic hardship? A greater recycling of our Big Book? An increased reading of non-A.A. literature? Or, perhaps, have a significant number of sponsors and groups stopped the practice of making sure a newcomer has a Big Book?"

Greg's questions beg answers; here are a few:

At the Chicago Area Service Office, reports former manager Howard G., "Sales of A.A. literature have dipped slightly, probably because a number of treatment facilities have either closed and/or are providing care on an outpatient basis. In our experience, people generally are buying non-A.A. literature *in addition* to the A.A. publications, not as a substitute for them."

Indie C., manager of the Memphis Area Intergroup Association, says that "overall sales of A.A. literature, which is all we sell, have almost doubled in the past two years—but mainly because of purchases by treatment centers. They of course are struggling to survive

in a poor economy, and a number just aren't making it. Their orders are about half what they used to be."

In St. Paul, Minnesota, A.A. literature sales are up approximately 4%, reports Dick C., manager of the Intergroup, Central Office. "A year ago," he explains, "we did away with all non-A.A. literature, which was diffusing our message. Here you had books on adult children of alcoholics, there you had a plethora of general self-help materials, and people were confused. Today we focus our message on A.A. exclusively and get through to more alcoholics all the time. Which really is the bottom line."

According to Susan K., administrator of the Baltimore Intergroup Council, the sales of A.A. literature were down \$10,000 in 1992. "People just have less money," she says, "and it does appear that group membership is shrinking. Also, the treatment facilities are falling apart and not feeding people into the A.A. meetings as much as before. Then, even if the people didn't stay, they would come in by the busloads and buy our A.A. books."

Duke D., coordinator of the Albuquerque Central Office in New Mexico, says that sales of A.A. Conference-approved literature—"which is the only reading material we carry"—are staying about the same as last year. However, he thinks one reason for declining sales in other areas "may be that Twelve-Step groups such as Narcotics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous, which used to rely heavily on A.A.'s Big Book, are now printing their own books. This could account for as much as a 10% reduction in sales."

At the Los Angeles Central Office, sales during the first three months of 1993 were 6% higher than during the same period in 1992. Says executive director Radclyfe L.: "This year, to date, we've sold an average of 660 hardcover, and about 355 softcover, Big Books each month. We've also sold 300 hardcover, and 225 softcover, copies of the Twelve and Twelve. Some of the other A.A. literature, which is all we handle, is selling at a brisker pace than in several years despite California's dismal economy."

Radclyfe attributes this healthy sales picture in large part to "our recent efforts to improve communications with our 2,200 member groups, of which only 17-20% actively support the central office. Recently we held a telethon to contact each and all of them—to acquaint them with our central office and dialogue with them about their needs and how our services can be of help. Dances and other events sponsored by the central office have further generated activity and literature sales."

This small sampling of experience is a start in assessing the A.A. literature picture and taking steps to improve it. Your own experience and suggestions are welcome. Please mail to Box 4-5-9, P.O. Box 4-5-9, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

Creative Sharing Raises Interest in A.A. Literature

Brian S. is 22 years old, four years sober, "high on A.A. general service," and brimming over with fresh approaches to carrying the timeless A.A. message of sobriety.

As literature chairperson of the Marin County District in California's Northern Coastal Area, Brian has activated one idea that is simplicity itself. "Each month," he reports, "I spotlight an A.A. book, pamphlet or service piece at our district meeting. Take, for instance, the book *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*. I talked about how Dr. Bob and the oldtimers had an earthy, often humorous hands-on approach to newcomers, such as Sister Ignatia's tart admonition to 'bend our knees instead of our elbows.' And I stressed the importance of becoming familiar with A.A. history and how it can directly benefit our sobriety and our efforts to help others."

Immediately afterward, he notes, "a lot of people who'd been meaning to read the book but hadn't gotten around to it suddenly found the time and the inclination to do so."

One of Brian's best A.A. literature-of-the-month talks featured the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity." "That was a hot topic," he remembers, "and some people came up after the meeting to say they had a much clearer understanding of the principles of anonymity than before. Also, I'd brought a stack of the pamphlets with me; when I looked around, they were gone."

Meanwhile, a spinoff project is already on the burner. As of this writing, Brian, together with several other A.A.s, including a 16-year-old member he sponsors, are preparing to launch a group that offers a variation on the Big Book theme so popular around the country. Instead of the Big Book alone, the new North Bay Group will study any and all printed literature that emanates from A.A., from the smallest flyer to the Grapevine to the annual *Final Report* of the General Service Conference.

Says Brian: "I'm having such a good time, and I guess it's okay. My sponsor says there's no substitute for enthusiasm."

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

“Because of Their Caring Support . . .”

Last Christmas, A.A. member Dennis S. of Oromocto, Canada, was serving in Croatia and Bosnia with the United Nations Protection Force. Dennis wrote about his holiday experience on foreign soil: “Two of the most memorable pieces of correspondence arrived at Christmas. A group of men returned from leave and gave me a hand-delivered package. It was from my home group and contained a tape, a number of cards wishing me well, and, most importantly, several issues of the Grapevine. Several days prior to that I had received a Christmas card which had over one hundred signatures on it. Still, today, I do not know all the people who took the time to send me a message.

“At one point while there, I was beginning to think that maybe a couple of beers would not hurt me. After all, everyone in my tent was capable of drinking the two beers per man per day limit. Why not me? It was during this period that I received the January Grapevine, reminding me of the First Step. Although I cannot say that I would have drunk had my home group not given me the support they did, I do feel very safe in saying that it is because of their caring support that I did not drink.”

A Worldwide Sharing Experience —In One Spot

Picture this scene: 80 ships arriving weekly from as many countries, 1,000 sailors spilling out of them on three-hour passes, 16,000 trucks hauling goods away daily, hundreds of dock workers, plus 6,000 containers shipped inland weekly by rail. The containers bound for Manhattan *must* be unloaded here.

This is Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, one of the world's largest—and busiest—ports, and guess what? A.A. meetings, and large numbers of A.A.s doing service, abound.

Now imagine this. You're a Swedish sailor, your ship has just pulled in, you speak a little English, you've been at sea too long, you're feeling antsy—and you *need* a meeting! Today! Now! So you make a phone call and before long an A.A. member meets you dockside, drives you to a meeting, shares with you over a cup of coffee and drives you back to your ship when your time is up.

You could call this place A.A.'s international melting pot, and all this global sharing is taking place every



day, year in, year out. Daily meetings are held at noon, Monday through Friday at the Seafarers for all Nations, and on Thursday evenings at the Stella Maris Chapel. Spanish-speaking meetings are held upon request, if the regularly scheduled ones for the Spanish-speaking dockworkers don't fit in with your visit.

The daily meeting was the brainchild eight years ago of Father Charlie, a member of the Fellowship who saw the immense need to bring the A.A. message to ship personnel passing through, as well as for the regular dockside workers. Literally thousands of A.A.s pass through this bustling port annually, Father Charlie says, and on any given day, 40 to 60 sailors and other ship personnel fill the meeting hall, where there are 15 to 20 regulars.

Another member of the clergy, Rev. Jean Smith, a nonalcoholic and friend of Father Charlie's, is active in helping to shuttle new arrivals on short notice from ships to meetings. Rev. Smith came to Port Elizabeth from another port city, Los Angeles, where she was similarly involved, working closely with A.A.s needing everything from a meeting book to travel accommodations. Typically, a new arrival (who has her number from a list of possible contacts) puts a call through and she, in turn, gets in touch with an A.A. member.

Port Elizabeth is a friendly place; the Stella Maris Chapel sits close to the railroad tracks—very close. When a meeting is in progress, which is often, it's quite common that when trains hauling containers roll by, somebody yells, “Hi there guys. Having a good meeting?”

Deadline for Directory Information —March 1, 1994

A reminder for area delegates: If you haven't already returned your group information printouts, please remember that the *final* deadline for inclusion in the directories is March 1, 1994.

Printouts corrected to show up-to-date group information and returned to G.S.O. by the areas, will be used to produce the 1994/95 A.A. Directories: Eastern U.S., Western U.S., and Canadian. These confidential directories list groups and contacts; delegates and trustees; central offices/intergroups; and international contacts.

Punjabi Groups Serve As Stepping Stones Into Mainstream A.A.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, there is a large population of Punjabi-speaking alcoholics, and in increasing numbers, they are finding help in A.A. meetings conducted in their native tongue.

Says Singh S., who arrived 25 years ago from Punjab, a region presently divided between India and Pakistan, "As many as 85% of our men here in Canada have a problem with drinking. I'd say that every second family has one or more alcoholics, so the problem is very serious." He refers to men only, he explains, "because among our people, alcoholic women are very rare; 99% of them have never even tasted alcohol. But all too many of them experience the tragedies of alcoholism through the sickness of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers."

Several years ago, relates Viki E., manager of the Vancouver Central Office, "a nonprofit organization called OASIS, that helps new Canadians integrate into the community, offered space in their offices for A.A. meetings, and so the first Punjabi group in Vancouver was born."

At one point there were three groups, Viki says, "but now there are only two. The majority of our Punjabi members stay a while, then go on to become part of mainstream A.A. They are not interested in supporting special-interest or special-language groups; they just want to 'belong' to the Fellowship. What with constant flux in membership, there is not enough long-term sobriety in the Punjabi groups to provide the stability that's available at regular meetings."

But for newcomers, the Punjabi groups are a godsend. "They feel comfortable with their own people and are more willing to trust," says Singh. "In both groups,

people are free to speak in a variety of languages—Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, English, French. 'What happened to you?', they ask. 'How are you staying sober?' 'Do you have a sponsor?' 'Can I be of help?' It's beautiful. It works.

"As many of us know," he points out, "coming to A.A. the first time can be a scary experience, especially if you're also a newcomer to the country and don't speak the language. I remember when I hit bottom in 1972. Sitting in my sister's house in a drunken haze, I saw an A.A. public service announcement on TV and called for help like it said to do.

"Soon a black car pulled up and out came a fellow at least 6'4", followed by another almost as big and tall. They wore dark suits, white shirts and ties, and ducking back from my window, I was convinced they were FBI undercover agents. They rang the bell and I didn't answer. Then they banged on the door and threatened to break it down if I didn't open up, so I did. The bigger one, 'big Mack,' grabbed me and said, in English, 'We love you.' Then they drove me to Mack's house, poured coffee into me, took me to a meeting and told me, 'You drink again and we'll shoot you!'

"As it turned out, I did drink again before having what I hope was my last drink 10 years ago. I like to think that by being active in the Punjabi groups, I'm helping to give some other alcoholic the support he needs so he won't have to go out and do what I did."

Looking back, Singh says, "Sobriety saved my life. I was finally able to hold a steady job and my wife, who had left me because of my drinking, came back. Today we have two grown sons. My wife's name is Surinder but it should be mine, because surrender in A.A. gave me what I have today."

P.I.

Revised P.I. Discount Packages and Guidelines

Sharing A.A. literature and information with the public is a primary service of local Public Information committees, who strive to see that the A.A. message is available to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Recognizing the need to update the discount packages used by the respective committees, the C.P.C. and P.I. staff people worked together with hopes of benefiting those they serve. The goals were to provide a range of A.A. information while, at the same time, trying to lower the costs to local committees.

P.I. discount packages are available in four formats. P-71 (\$30.00), contains 780 pieces, which include basic A.A. recovery pamphlets and Anonymity wallet cards. A larger package, P-72 (\$75.00), consists of 2,200 pieces. Half packages are also available: P-77, \$15.00, 390 pieces; P-79, \$37.50, 1,100 pieces. A Literature Catalog and order form are enclosed with each package; 20% discount applies to all. For more information on discount literature packages, committee members may write or call G.S.O.

The A.A. Guidelines on Public Information (MG-7) have been revised and updated to reflect current information and sharing. Copies are available through a local central office/intergroup or G.S.O. (15 cents each).

A subcommittee of the trustees' Public Information Committee has begun working toward proposals for revising the P.I. Workbook (M-27), prompted by the 1993 Conference Public Information Committee's request to begin updating the text. The subcommittee is also looking into a simpler, more concise and less expensive workbook format. Their ideas for text and format will be reviewed by the 1994 Conference P.I. Committee before final changes are made and/or a new workbook produced.

Treatment Facilities

Cincinnati Intergroup's Literature Committee Survey

Last year, the Cincinnati Intergroup Literature Committee conducted a survey regarding, among other things, the policies of literature distribution to treatment and correctional facilities. One hundred and two of the 150 intergroups/central offices surveyed responded. They reported that in keeping with the Tradition of group autonomy, practices vary from intergroup to intergroup, but discernible trends may be described. Following are excerpts from their report:

"The abundance of A.A. literature directed toward newcomers in A.A., and suitable for distribution in A.A. meetings in treatment and correctional facilities, is evidence of the importance the Fellowship places on the use of literature to carry the A.A. message to alcoholics in these facilities. In the Cincinnati area, which has 183 meetings in treatment and correctional facilities, the intergroup directly sponsors these meetings through donations of A.A. books, pamphlets and meeting schedules.

"Rising overhead at the central office, increasing demand and decreases in group and individual contributions to intergroup being factors, the Cincinnati Intergroup has found it necessary in recent months to decrease its per-meeting allotment of literature, and to review its policies concerning literature distribution in correctional and treatment facilities, as well as sources of funding in general. The current survey by the Cincinnati Intergroup Literature Committee is an attempt to acquire more information pertinent to this problem.

"Sixty of the intergroups stated they were responsible for the management of meetings and distribution of A.A. literature to meetings in correctional and treatment facilities. Twenty-six stated a separate and autonomous Hospitals and Institutions Committee (H&I) was responsible, and 16 stated general service (the district or area) was responsible. The current study limited itself to funding and policies of intergroup involvement only.

Source of Funding: "Thirty-two of the 60 intergroups responsible for the management and distribution of literature to meetings in treatment and correctional facilities support the effort through their general funds. Eleven use funds generated by special fund raisers, or accept special donations of literature. Six intergroups accept earmarked checks for the purpose, six state that autonomous meetings in the facility, or the group responsible for providing A.A. meetings in the facility, purchase the literature directly from the intergroup. One intergroup stated that both the treatment and correctional facilities in their vicinity purchase directly from the intergroup. One intergroup draws the interest from a special CD.

"Three intergroups supplement an allotment from the general fund; one utilized Pink Cans—specially labeled containers popular with H&I committees in the western United States. One intergroup received special donations of literature in addition to literature provided through the general fund, and one intergroup accepts earmarked checks as well."

Meetings in Treatment Facilities: "Twenty-one intergroups donate literature to A.A. meetings in treatment facilities by means of a budgeted allotment. Three utilize special donations of literature or money, and two do so only at the request of a client or the sponsor group. Of these 26 intergroups, five will donate only to a meeting in a public detox unit. Six intergroups cooperate with sponsor groups to provide literature; five work in conjunction with autonomous groups meeting in treatment facilities. Four intergroups did not supply this information.

"In 22 cities, treatment facilities purchase A.A. literature for their clients, either from the intergroup or directly from A.A. World Services, Inc. In 13 of these, the intergroups do not provide literature to the A.A. meetings."

Discounts to Treatment Facilities: "Thirteen of 102

intergroups stated they provided discounts to treatment facilities; 11 of these stated they discounted for quantities only. Nine intergroups volunteered that they raise prices for non-A.A. entities. One intergroup volunteered that they carried accounts."

Summary: "From 35 of 60 responses, it is apparent that the most utilized source of funding by intergroups for donated literature to A.A. meetings in treatment and correctional facilities is the general fund, whether it be supplemented at times by special donations or earmarked checks. This would indicate a strong support on the part of A.A. groups for this type of Twelfth Step work.

"The survey would indicate that intergroups are somewhat more reserved about donating literature to A.A. meetings in treatment facilities than to meetings in correctional facilities. Twenty-six of 60 intergroups responsible for management of A.A. meetings in treatment and correctional facilities donate to treatment facilities meetings, as opposed to 37 which donate to meetings in correctional. The fact that five intergroups specified that they would donate only to public detox units, and the fact that in 22 cities treatment facilities purchase A.A. literature, could indicate a general reticence on the part of A.A. to donate to meetings in 'for-profit' facilities. This is a matter for further discussion and investigation.

"That 102 of 150 intergroups surveyed responded to the questionnaire is evidence of the interest of intergroups in the issue of distribution of A.A. literature, particularly donations to A.A. meetings in treatment and correctional facilities, an issue which has become a financial dilemma for many."

Further comments and inquiries may be directed to the Cincinnati Fellowship in A.A., P.O. Box 19336, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219-0336, Attn: Literature Committee.

Correctional Facilities

Conference Committee Makes a Difference on Several Fronts

A glance at the *Final Report* of the 1993 General Service Conference shows that the Correctional Facilities Committee made headway on a number of issues. While no Advisory Actions were taken, the suggestions will go a

long way helping to carry the A.A. message inside the walls. Some interesting highlights:

Defining an A.A. group—After considering a suggestion to clarify the status of C.F. groups vis-a-vis "outside" A.A. groups, the committee decided that the best descriptions of *any* A.A. group are contained in the long form of Tradition Three; and in Warranty Six, as it appears in Concept XII. The latter states that "each A.A. group [can] conduct its internal affairs as it wishes—it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; . . . that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, *as a group*, they have no other purpose or affiliation."

The committee also concurred that whether the general service representative of a C.F. group is an "outside" or "inside" A.A. member should be left up to local and/or group autonomy. The same holds true for determining whether G.S.R.s from correctional facilities should have a vote at district and area meetings.

Correctional Correspondence Service—This program at the General Service Office helps many an inmate and outside A.A. to establish ongoing contact, with the understanding that each will honor the other's anonymity. However, while recognizing the importance of the Correspondence Service, the committee also appreciates the difficulty G.S.O. has in obtaining "outside" A.A.s to correspond with inmates. It suggests that "perhaps it is now time for the areas to become more involved in this Twelfth Step work."

The committee further suggested that, when feasible, G.S.O. contact the appropriate C.F. committee chairperson when an inmate from that area writes to request an "outside" correspondent. It is aware that in some instances, inmates are not allowed to receive letters from "outside" A.A.s in the same state, and says that when this occurs, other areas can be asked to help out.

Another suggestion: that C.F. committees obtain a permanent mailing address or post office box to facilitate the anonymity aspect of the correspondence program. It also comes in handy for inmates to use when requesting literature, prerelease contacts and "outside" A.A. speakers.

Keeping members informed—The committee has explored ways in which C.F. committees can keep members in general service aware and up-to-date concerning A.A. literature and audiovisual material. It suggests that C.F. committees make these "tools of sobriety" available at area assemblies, conventions and roundups. Groups can also become involved by purchasing Grapevines and literature for A.A. groups in local institutions; districts can hold informational workshops or, perhaps, a "day of sharing"; and area, district and central office newsletters are good forums for sharing whatever information is available to help carry the A.A. message "inside."

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.

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

Calendar of Events

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

December

- 3-January 2 — *Chicago, Illinois*. Third Annual Blazing Trails Mega Alkathon. Write: Ch., 2018 W. Giddings Street, Chicago, IL 60625
- 3-5 — *Homer, Arkansas*. Area Qtly. Write: Ch., 3858, Lake St., Ste. 20, Homer, AR 99603
- 3-5 — *Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida*. 18th N. FL/S. GA Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 51134, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
- 3-5 — *St. Louis, Missouri*. Southwest Regional Forum. Write: Sec., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 3.5 — *Myrtle Beach, South Carolina*. The Sandlapper Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 14634, Surfside Beach, SC 29578

January

- 7.9 — *Garden City, Kansas*. 24th Annual S.W. Kansas Conf. Write: Ch., 826 N. Durham, Ulysses, KS 67880
- 7.16 — *Whangarei, New Zealand*. Fourth Annual Serenity Camp. Write: Ch., 5 Mountain Rd., Whangarei, New Zealand
- 8-10 — *South Padre Island, Texas*. Lower Rio Grande Valley Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 5453, Brownsville, TX 78520
- 14-16 — *Galveston, Texas*. S.E. Texas Area

- Conf. Write: Ch., 1215 Ball St. #2, Galveston, TX 77550
- 27.30 — *Fort Walton Beach, Florida*. Emerald Coast Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 875, Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32549-0875

February

- 4-6 — *De-Hann, Ostend, Belgium*. North Sea Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3, 8000 Brugge 1, Belgium
- 4-6 — *Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada*. Dist. 5 Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 742, Station A, Fredericton, NB E3B 5B4
- 18-20 — *El Paso, Texas*. 32nd Annual Jamboree. Write: Ch., 3330 Douglas St., El Paso, TX 79903
- 18.21 — *New Bedford, Massachusetts*. South-eastern Massachusetts Round-Up (sponsored by gay & lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 492, Somerset, MA 02726-0492
- 25-27 — *Kansas City, Kansas*. Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1281, Mission, KS 66222
- 25-27 — *Tacoma/Fife, Washington*. Puget Sound Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 112374, Tacoma, WA 98411-2374

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

December (page 23): The holidays; singleness of purpose

January (page 8): The Steps are the program

March

- 4-6 — *Gulf Shores, Alabama*. 10th Annual District 19 Jubilee. Write: Ch., Box 1183, Foley, AL 36536
- 11-13 — *Victorville, California*. 10th Annual High Desert Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1894, Apple Valley, CA 92307
- 25-27 — *Osage Beach, Missouri*. First Lake Ozarks Conf. Write: Ch., Box 475, Versailles, MO 65084
- 31-April 3 — *Atlanta, Georgia*. 37th ICYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 48581, Doraville, GA 30362

Planning a Future Event?

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

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

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 19____

Name of event: _____ Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

Flip up this end of page for tips on keeping your holiday sober

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