



*As the Holiday Season stirs our hearts
and spirits with renewed hope, gratitude and love,
may we remember that great legion who still suffer
from alcoholism, that they may find the freedom
in sobriety that we have found.*

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■ Reminder: Résumés for Trustees Election due Jan. 1, 2014

Two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees—from the Pacific and Eastern Canada regions, will be elected at the General Service Conference in May 2014. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2014, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new Pacific regional trustee will succeed Rod B., of Salt Lake City; the new Eastern Canada trustee will follow Donald C., of Terrebonne, Quebec.

Please submit your candidate's résumé to the Secretary, trustees' Nominating Committee, General Service Office.

■ P.I. Appointed Committee Member

The trustees' Committee on Public Information has an opening for an appointed committee member (ACM). We are searching for an appropriate individual to fill this position and would appreciate any recommendations.

Some of the qualities most desirable for this appointed committee member opening are:

- Experience in A.A. service.
- Experience/skill in helping to develop public information videos.
- Professional expertise in traditional media, as well as in currently evolving media communications. The new ACM is needed by the committee for ongoing planning as well as projects related to online communications.
- Availability for meetings of this trustees' committee held during General Service Board weekends (usually the last weekend in January, July and October), as well as one meeting during the General Service Conference in April.
- At least five years of continuous sobriety.
- The ability to work within the committee structure.

In seeking applications for all vacancies in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Fellowship is committed to creating a large applicant file of qualified persons which reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of A.A. itself.

To obtain a résumé form for this opening please call the P.I. desk at G.S.O. (212) 870-3119, or e-mail publicinfo@aa.org. Deadline for applications is Jan. 2, 2014.

■ A.A.W.S. Offers Online Literature Sales

G.S.O. has announced that members of the Fellowship may order books, pamphlets and other A.A. literature on a recently launched Web site.

The new A.A.W.S., Inc. Online Store is now live, offering all active items in the literature catalog to all consumers in the U.S. and Canada. The site is available in the three languages of our Conference structure, English, Spanish and French.

The Online Store Web site is designed to be easy to navigate and to place orders through a shopping cart, and shipping charges are spelled out on the site. Individual A.A. members and groups are encouraged, as always, to continue to purchase literature through their local sources, such as Intergroups and Central Offices.

The www.aa.org homepage provides a link to the new consumer Online Store to order A.A.W.S. literature.



■ 2014 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service by providing an opportunity for A.A. groups and area trusted servants, as well as any interested A.A. members in a particular region, to share experience, strength and hope with representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members. There is no registration fee for Regional Forums, they are hosted by the General Service Board and coordinated by G.S.O.

These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas in better carrying the message through service work. First time attendees are specially welcomed.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum are sent to area committee members, delegates, DCM's, and central offices and intergroups approximately six months ahead of time. Online registration is also available at www.aa.org.

The final Regional Forum in 2013 is in the East Central region, November 15-17, at Hilton Ft. Wayne/Grand Wayne Convention Center, Fort Wayne, Indiana. In 2014 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *Western Canada*—February 20-23, Radisson Hotel Winnipeg Downtown, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- *Pacific*—July 11-13, Double Tree Hotel Boise-Riverside, Boise, Idaho
- *Eastern Canada*—August 15-17, Sharaton Laval Hotel, Laval, Quebec
- *Southeast*—September 26-28, Verdanza Hotel, Isla Verde, Puerto Rico.

■ The Big Book: A.A.'s Oldtimer in Print

Seventy-five years ago, the first edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* began with a simple introduction: “We, of Alcoholics Anonymous,” said the foreword, “are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics *precisely how we have recovered* is the main purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary. We think this account of our experiences will help everyone to better understand the alcoholic. Many do not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person. And besides, we are sure that our way of living has its advantages for all.”

Further on, in the chapter titled “There Is a Solution,” some additional explanation was provided regarding the whys and wherefores of the early A.A.s in putting this book together:

“We have concluded to publish an anonymous volume setting forth the problem as we see it. We shall bring to the task our combined experience and knowledge. This should suggest a useful program for anyone concerned with a drinking problem.

“Of necessity there will have to be discussion of matters medical, psychiatric, social, and religious. We are aware that these matters are, from their very nature, controversial. Nothing would please us so much as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. We shall do our utmost to achieve that ideal. Most of us sense that real tolerance of other people’s shortcomings and viewpoints and a respect for their opinions are attitudes which make us more useful to others. Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.”

And *Alcoholics Anonymous* has been doing exactly that for 75 years, providing a conduit to recovery for alcoholics literally around the world. Translated into 70 languages, plus American Sign Language and Braille, with multiple print, audio, and electronic formats, A.A.’s basic text is one of the best-selling books of all time, having sold nearly 40 million copies. In 2011, *Time* magazine placed the book on its list of the 100 best and most influential books written in English since 1923, when the magazine began. In 2012, the Library of Congress designated it as one of 88 “Books that Shaped America.”

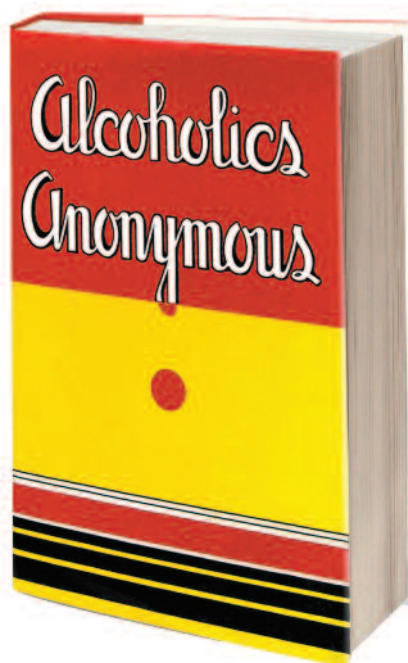
At the time of publication, the Big Book was typically well received by most critics. A 1939 review by the *Journal of the American Osteopathic*

Association called the stories of personal experience “gripping,” and the *New England Journal of Medicine* urged all who at some time had to deal with the problem of alcoholism to read this “stimulating account.” And, while a review in the *New York Times* referred to it as “a strange book” and “unlike any other book before published,” the reviewer, Percy Hutchison, noted that “the general thesis of *Alcoholics Anonymous* is more soundly based psychologically than any other treatment of the subject I have ever come upon.”

From the world of religion, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, the founding minister of Riverside Church in New York and a professor at Union Theological Seminary, called the book “extraordinary,” commending it to “the careful attention of anyone interested in the problem of alcoholism.” The book, he wrote, “will give them, as no other treatise known to this reviewer will, an inside view of the problem which the alcoholic faces.... The book is not in the least sensational,” he continued. “It is notable for its sanity, restraint, and freedom from over-emphasis and fanaticism. It is a sober, careful, tolerant, sympathetic treatment of the alcoholic’s problem and the successful techniques by which its co-authors have won their freedom.”

Not all reviewers, however, found merit in the book, especially those in the medical field. A review appearing in the October 1939 *Journal of the American Medical Association* called the book “a curious combination of organizing propaganda and religious exhortation ... in no sense a scientific book.” Similarly, the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* said the Big Book was “big in words ... a rambling sort of camp meeting.... Of the inner meaning of alcoholism there is hardly a word. It is all on the surface material.” The review went on to “degrade” the alcoholic: “Inasmuch as the alcoholic, speaking generally, lives a wish-fulfilling infantile regression to the omnipotent delusional state, perhaps he is best handled for the time being at least by regressive mass psychological methods, in which, as is realized, religious fervors belong, hence the religious trend of the book.”

Nevertheless, as the book began to take hold, selling over 300,000 copies in its first 15 years, it continued reaching an ever-broader audience. Following publication of the book’s second edition in 1955, one reviewer stated that the pages of the book were already American legend and would “remain there, through the full history of man’s pursuit of maturity.” And still later, with publication of the third edition in



1976, Dr. Abraham Twerski, Director of the Gateway Rehabilitation Center, wrote in the *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, “The Twelve Steps are a protocol for personality, for growth, and for self-realization, a process of value to even the non-alcoholic or non-addicted individual. Thus, even if science should someday discover a physiologic solution to the destructive effects of alcohol, the personality enhancing value of the Big Book will continue.” Now in its fourth edition, the book has touched the lives of alcoholics around the world, showing, as noted in the first edition’s foreword, “precisely how we have recovered.”

The writing of the Big Book took several months to accomplish and in May 1938, when work initially began on the first draft, A.A. co-founder Bill W. had been sober about three and a half years. Dr. Bob was sober just under three years, and the other 100 early members who contributed in one way or another to the writing of the book had been sober for periods ranging from a couple of years to a couple of months. Drafts were sent back and forth to and from New York and Akron. After the New York members had reviewed each chapter, Akron members were given a chance to give their input.

In order to give the volume medical standing, Dr. William D. Silkworth had agreed to write an introduction. Then physician-in-chief of Towns Hospital in New York, Dr. Silkworth was, according to Bill, “very much a founder of A.A. From him we learned the nature of our illness. He supplied us with the tools with which to puncture the toughest alcoholic ego... *the obsession of the mind* that compels us to drink and *the allergy of the body* that compels us to go mad or die.” He was one of the many non-alcoholic friends who, in the early days, risked their own professional standing to give the Fellowship the support it so badly needed. His introduction for the first edition, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” is still part of the front matter of the Big Book today.

In addition to discussing the text at meetings in New York and Akron, the early A.A.s decided to solicit comments from nonalcoholic friends, in order to be sure there were no medical errors or material that might prove offensive to those of different religions.

One of the most important comments for the future of the Fellowship came from a New Jersey psychiatrist. He pointed out that the text of the original manuscript was too full of the words “you” and “must.” He suggested substitutions be made wherever possible with such expressions as “we ought” or “we should.” “I argued weakly against it,” Bill said of this suggestion, “but soon gave in; it was perfectly apparent that the doctor was dead right.”

The change from the more didactic initial approach to gentler more inclusive language helped make the book more accessible. In the published version today’s readers are familiar with, for example, Chapter 5 begins, “Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path,” though it started out in the original version as

a person “... who has followed our directions.” Similarly, the sentence in the original, “If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it then you are ready to follow directions,” became “...then you are ready to take certain steps,” and “But there is One who has all power... that One is God...you must find him now!” was softened to read “... may you find Him now.”

Phrases like “The first requirement is...” never survived the editing process, and the words “Now we think you can take it!” preceding “Here are the steps we took...” were ultimately deleted. And providentially, for thousands of present day alcoholics and their families, employers and friends, the book no longer directs, “If you are not convinced on these vital issues, you ought to re-read the book to this point or else throw it away!”

Concluding his description of the book-writing process in *A.A. Comes of Age*, Bill made it clear that all the hassles had been worth it. “It should here be emphasized that the creation of A.A.’s book brought forth much more than disputes about its contents. As the volume grew so did the conviction that we were on the right track. We saw tremendous vistas of what this book might become and might do. High expectation based on a confident faith was the steady and sustaining overtone of feeling that finally prevailed among us. Like the sound of a receding thunderstorm, the din of our earlier battles was now only a rumble. The air cleared and the sky was bright. We all felt good.”

The official publication date of the Big Book, as noted by the United States Copyright Office, is April 10, 1939. There were 4,730 books printed, with red cloth binding, wide columns, thick paper, and a red, yellow, black and white dust jacket. To commemorate this printing — and the book’s 75th anniversary — A.A.W.S. has made available a facsimile edition, printed on paper similar to the original and with the same jacket and contents. You may preorder after Nov. 15; orders will be mailed in April 2014. For more information, contact the General Service Office or visit www.aa.org.



■ ‘An Incredible Journey’ — Adrienne B. Retires

Even before she joined the staff of G.S.O. in 1996, Adrienne B. made it her practice to help people. She was raised in Harlem and began to drink after her mother and grandmother died before she was 16. When she went away to college her drinking increased. Adrienne has lived in every borough, but lives in Brooklyn today because her drinking friends got tired of having to haul her back to the Bronx after a night’s imbibing. Adrienne got sober on October 29, 1984, got her MSW, and eventually began working as a case worker in Child Protective Services in New York City.

At the same time, she was doing service at her then home group, Old Park Slope Caton, in Brooklyn, and became the C.P.C. chair for Area 49 (Southeast New York). When there was an opening on the G.S.O. staff, her sponsor suggested she apply. “I told her, no, I was a social worker,” Adrienne says, but she did as her sponsor urged. When they called her for an interview “just being at G.S.O. was a thrill,” she says, and the thrill was compounded many times when she learned she got the job.

Adrienne retired this fall after seventeen years of what has been “an incredible journey.” She started out on Treatment Facilities and rotated to nearly every staff assignment at G.S.O. “The ones that tend to be the most memorable are the ones I didn’t want to be on,” she says. She didn’t want Literature because there were so many projects going on at once—with so many subcommittee meetings—“but when my time came I loved every minute of it,” as she helped oversee Conference-approved revisions on the pamphlets “Young People and A.A.,” “It Happened To Alice” and “Too Young,” as well as the third edition of the Spanish-language Big Book.

At a time before the use of technical communication was a common practice, part of Adrienne’s job on the International desk involved travel. “I was a kid from Harlem, traveling around the globe, providing experience from G.S.O., upon request, to help other countries in their efforts to carry the A.A. message.”

At G.S.O., Adrienne says, “These are some of the hardest working, most dedicated people I’ve ever met. I love the fact that there’s an open-door policy here. All visitors, but especially the A.A.s, are always welcome to come and tour and meet staff and participate in our regular A.A. meeting on Fridays. Once they’ve been here, the A.A.s really do understand that G.S.O. belongs to them. We don’t do Twelfth Step work so much as facilitate it. But it’s the same muscle. I love helping other A.A.s help themselves.”

There is no experience comparable to “working with the organization that saved my life,” Adrienne says. But she recognized that it was time to retire and spend some time with her aunt, the woman who helped raise her and whom she calls her mom. Also, she is looking forward to sponsoring newcomers and becoming more active in her home group, Spring Creek. “It’s been an incredible journey,” she says, “And I can’t wait to see what will happen next.”

■ Bringing the A.A. Message for ‘Stand Down’ Veterans

A “Stand Down” is an evocative military term that evolved during the Vietnam War and refers to removing weary troops from the battlefield and taking them to an environment that is safe and secure. In 1988, a group of Vietnam veterans in San Diego decided to organize a peacetime Stand Down for homeless veterans. Stand Downs are typically one to three day events that provide homeless vets (and their families) with food, clothing, health screening and counseling.

As the pamphlet “A.A. and the Armed Services” shows, Alcoholics Anonymous has had a long history with the military—A.A. meetings are held at many Armed Services bases all over the world. So, it was only natural that A.A. would be present there at Stand Downs to carry the A.A. message. One such event is held at the Elks Lodge in Latham, New York, in September, and A.A. has been there since 2011, its presence spearheaded by Bill C., a Korean War vet with over 30 years sobriety.

“The Elks called me two years ago, when I was Area 48 Treatment chair,” Bill says. “They wanted me to set up an A.A. information booth at their Stand Down.” A.A. is a presence at Stand Downs across the nation, but Bill got some resistance from other A.A.s in Area 48. One member was concerned with the possible perception of affiliation with the Elks. But, as former Corrections chair, Bill pointed out that he brought A.A. into prisons, which doesn’t mean that A.A. is affiliated with correctional institutions. “I go where there is a need to help other alcoholics. If I meet a thousand alcoholics and I help one, I’ve done my job.”

Bill explains how the Latham Stand Down works: “They send out vans for a 60 mile radius around Albany and the vets come out of shelters, rehabs, motels, you name it. These don’t have to be veterans of foreign wars—they just need to have served. They range in age from 20 to 60 and above. Men and women, and also children from their families.”

The Stand Down brings vets to Latham and give them breakfast and a card that lists all the services available to them in the various booths. “A.A. is provided with a booth and a table,” Bill says. “The first year there, I came with three volunteers and I brought five the next. We give out A.A. literature and Grapevines, while we have them. Vets will sometimes sit down with us and we have an A.A. meeting right there.”

Bill stresses that, while the veterans need to get their card signed at all the booths in order to get their clothing allowance at the end of the Stand Down, there is no proselytizing and no pressure: “If they’re not interested, we sign their cards and they go on their way. We give them a meeting schedule for the area and they put it in their pocket and on a cold 20 below December day, when they crawl out from shivering under their box, they may look for a hot cup of coffee and they may get the A.A. message.”

The 2012 Stand Down at Latham drew 250-300 homeless veterans. “These vets break my heart,” Bill says. “It never dawned on me that I would be talking to so many women vets. They were coming through with kids.” In part because of this great need, Bill thinks this is the most worthwhile service he has done. “My philosophy is, people don’t really know what A.A. is all about and unless we get out and tell them they won’t know.”

■ Group Finances: Meeting Our Obligations

“Fiscal responsibility” is not a term too many active alcoholics would have been able to apply to themselves before finding recovery. Yet, once sober and in A.A., many have undergone a transformation where money and responsibility are concerned and have come to recognize the importance of self-support in providing ongoing Twelfth Step services, particularly at the group level.

Rents must be paid, literature purchased, local meeting lists published. Without some money, these basic services — and others — would go unfulfilled and alcoholics, searching for recovery, might never make their way to A.A.

As Bill W. put it, “Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a Society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility — one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and A. A. as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid.” (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 221)

With growing membership, maintaining these services has required ongoing fiscal responsibility and awareness at the group level. In some cases, groups are faced with unexpected fiscal issues related to the maintenance of group bank accounts, or obtaining proper insurance coverage for meeting places.

More and more frequently, for example, A.A. groups in the U.S. are being asked by banks to supply a Federal I.D. Number when opening a checking or savings account, whether or not it is an interest bearing account. And, with the evolution of insurance regulations, landlords may sometimes ask that A.A. groups carry insurance coverage.

Over the years, the General Service Conference and General Service Office have developed a number of resources to help A.A. individuals and groups deal effectively with many of these fiscal and legal responsibilities, recognizing, however, that when it comes to group finances, actual practices often vary given local laws, regulations and customs.

As noted in one of these resources, the service piece “The A.A. Group Treasurer” (F-96), the first step in obtaining a “Federal ID Number” for groups in the U.S. is by filing form SS-4, which can be obtained at any Internal Revenue Service office or at the IRS Web-site at www.irs.gov. Each A.A. group must get its own individual number; there is no one

number that applies to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. Depending on how much the group will keep on deposit at a bank and what its fees are, the group may want to file for tax-exempt status. As this can be a costly and far reaching decision, groups may benefit from careful and informed discussion before taking this step. For information, see IRS publication 557, “Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization.” Overall, however, it may be worthwhile to consult a local accountant to learn more about these subjects.

In the same vein, regarding insurance, while some groups cooperate with the facility where they meet by purchasing a “rider” in the facility’s liability insurance policy. Other groups may wish to get their own policy. We know of one district (and an intergroup) that combined resources and purchased a policy for the district. For specific information regarding local regulations, it may be helpful to consult a local insurance agency.

For additional information, many questions related to A.A. finances are covered in the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” (F-3), and the A.A. Guidelines on Finance (MG-15) provide detailed information on opening bank accounts, procuring tax I.D. numbers, and obtaining insurance coverage for the group.

“Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible,” wrote Bill W. (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 350), “whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office to arrange hospitalization and sponsorship, or the world service Headquarters to maintain unity and effectiveness all over the globe.

“Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion — to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to a recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength — and that, under our Tradition of self-support, *we are all going to foot the bill.*”

Now, *that’s* fiscal responsibility.

■ New Photos From G.S.O.’s Archives

Five new individual photos are now available from the G.S.O. Archives. These 8x10 black and white photos consist of Bill W. and Lois W. standing in their garden at Stepping Stones; Bill playing the violin; Bill at the 1955 General Service Conference with a copy of the Second Edition of the Big Book; Dr. Bob leaning against his car; and Father Ed Dowling.

These photos are available to A.A. members and groups only for use within the Fellowship. It is the policy of the General Service Office Archives to maintain the anonymity of all members, living or deceased, including our cofounders, at the level of public media. There is a suggested contribution of \$2.75 for each photograph to help defray the costs of printing and shipping. To request any of these photos, please contact the G.S.O. Archives at 212-870-3400 or by e-mail at archives@aa.org.

■ 2015 International Convention Frequently Asked Questions

In a little less than two years, the International Convention will celebrate A.A.'s 80th Anniversary, July 2-5, 2015, in Atlanta, Georgia. With a theme of "80 Years — Happy, Joyous and Free," A.A.s from around the world will converge on Atlanta to celebrate sobriety, and share experience, strength and hope in meetings, panels and workshops at the Georgia World Congress Center, the Georgia Dome and at other locations throughout the friendly city. Members of the Fellowship, as always, are now gearing up for this wonderful event and the General Service Office is beginning to receive inquiries. So here are some answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding the Convention.

Registration

Q When will registration forms be available?

A Registration forms will be mailed in August of 2014 to all G.S.R.s, Central Offices, Intergroups and international G.S.O.s. Online registration will be available September 3, 2014.

Q Will I be able to register online?

A Yes. There will be links to registration on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site, www.aa.org.

Q What about on-site registration?

A On-site registration will be set up in the Georgia World Congress Center and will open on Wednesday morning, July 1, 2015.

Q Must everyone register? I thought I didn't have to pay to go to an A.A. event.

A Yes. Everyone must register. Attendance at this special celebration is voluntary and, as responsible A.A. members, "we pay our own way." The International Convention is paid for by those A.A.s who participate in it.

Q How much will registration cost?

A Registration fees will be established in 2014. Our objective is to keep registration as accessible as possible. For recent International Conventions, the registration was around \$100 for this special self-supporting event.

Q Can travel agents register groups or individuals?

A No. Payments from travel agencies to register groups or individuals will not be accepted.

Housing

Q When can I reserve my hotel room?

A Once you have registered for the Convention, you will be able to sign up for housing.

Q Where are the main hotels?

A In Atlanta, our Convention hotel block of over 10,000 rooms will be in three main areas: Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta and at the Atlanta Hartsfield Airport area. Of those 10,000 rooms, the majority are in downtown Atlanta, within walking distance of the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) and the Georgia Dome. MARTA is Atlanta's public transit system and all of the hotels are within 1-2 blocks of MARTA, which has two stops at the GWCC and the Dome.

Q Can members contact hotels directly?

A No. To make the process as fair as possible, all housing requests will be processed through the official Housing Bureau.

Q Can travel agents make room reservations?

A Room reservations can only be made in individual people's names. Rooms available through the Housing Bureau, at specially negotiated Convention rates, are not commissionable to travel agents.

Q Can we request a room in the same hotel with friends?

A Yes, you can reserve more than one room through the housing process so long as your friends have registered for the Convention. You will need to provide their name(s) and be prepared to pay additional deposits.

Q If 50 of us are coming together from the same area, can we be in the same hotel?

A We do make an effort to accommodate group housing requests. There is a separate procedure for this to ensure fairness, while still trying to meet your needs. Contact the International Convention Coordinator at G.S.O. when we are closer to registration.

Transportation

Q Will local transportation be available?

A Many members will be within walking distance or a short ride on public transportation from their accommodations. All housing blocked for this event will be less than a 30-minute MARTA ride from the Georgia World Congress Center and the Georgia Dome.

Q What about special airline rates?

A As at other International Conventions, there will be special fares available. That information



will be available with the August 2014 registration information mailing.

Q Where can I find information about crossing the border into the U.S. for this event?

A For accurate, specific and up-to-date information about visas and travel into the U.S., visit the United States Department of State Web site: www.travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html.

If you are coming from abroad you may need a visa. Most Canadian citizens, and many citizens of countries in the United States Visa Waiver Program (VWP), do not need a visa. However, you will need a machine-readable passport valid for at least 90 days past your date of departure. The VWP countries are: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and United Kingdom.

If you do not come from a VWP country you must obtain a nonimmigrant visa. Plan ahead; it may take 6 months to receive a nonimmigrant visa, depending on the demand in your country.

Q Where do I obtain more information about the 2015 International Convention?

A More information will be available throughout 2014 and 2015 in *Box 4-5-9* and on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site, www.aa.org. All necessary information will be included in the registration packet, which will be available August 2014. A.A.'s Web site will be updated as more information becomes available.

We hope to see you in Atlanta to celebrate the 80th birthday of Alcoholics Anonymous.

■ November is Gratitude Month

For A.A. members November is a "gratitude month." (In Canada, it's October.)

This practice started in the 1940s, when the General Service Board held small "gratitude dinners," which were replaced in the 1960s by bigger and more elaborate "gratitude luncheons." These affairs, which Bill W. would address, were occasions for A.A. members to express their appreciation for the program. More important, it was A.A.'s opportunity to meet with members of the media to thank them for their sympathetic coverage. These luncheons were eventually discontinued.

Why November became Gratitude Month in the U.S. is uncertain. It may have something to do with Bill W.'s mistaken notion for a time that his sobriety began in November, instead of its actual start date of December 11. Or, it might be that Thanksgiving is in November. This is one of those A.A. mysteries shrouded in speculation.

Gratitude can be converted into any kind of action, big or small, individual or group. To celebrate gratitude, some groups will hold Traditions meetings in November to remind themselves of the rich heritage of A.A. Gratitude month is an ideal time to reflect on the Tradition of "self-support." Are we as a group or am I as an individual doing enough to support the services of A.A. as a whole? Other A.A. groups hold topic meetings on the subject of gratitude, send a gratitude gift of money to their local intergroup or to the General Service Office, or donate the A.A. Grapevine to someone homebound or in prison.

Almost any positive action is a reflection of gratitude — for example, a group may decide to make beginners kits available to newcomers and spend an evening stuffing envelopes with a meeting book, an address book and pencil, a copy of *Living Sober*, and a couple of A.A. pamphlets. Individual A.A.s may invite a sponsor or a sponsee out to lunch, or they may start a Step or Traditions meeting where there's an expressed need. Or they may make a private contract with themselves to always put out a hand to the newcomers and out-of-towners who show up at their home group.

Of course, individual A.A. members express gratitude for their sobriety in quiet ways throughout the year. Showing up early to set up a meeting or taking a meeting into a detox are ways of demonstrating gratitude for a life-saving program of recovery. The A.A. member who takes a call in the middle of the night from an alcoholic who needs to talk is expressing thanks for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Gratitude. It's a weighty, high-dignity word, but in truth its close companions are humor and joy. As Bill W. observed early on in the Big Book (p. 132), "Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others." What greater cause could there be for rejoicing than this?

■ 250,000 Square Miles of Opportunity

Manitoba has over 250,000 square miles, much of which is located in the far north, where some communities are accessible only by air or winter roads. For those who live in one of Manitoba's larger cities, such as Winnipeg or Brandon, dozens of A.A. meetings are available and people rarely have to drive more than 10 minutes to get to a meeting. But in Manitoba's remote communities this is not the case.

Throughout Manitoba, a number of government treatment centers are located in some of the more populous areas, like Winnipeg, Brandon, St. Rose and Thompson,

but when clients who hail from the northern regions are released to go back to places such as Cross Lake, Leaf Rapids and Churchill, they are returning to towns that have no A.A. meetings — and the prognosis for their continued recovery is not good. Over time, the success rate had been so poor, in fact, that a couple of years ago the director of one of the treatment centers in Thompson started talking to some of the local A.A.s about utilizing the government health telecommunications network to make an A.A. meeting available no matter where you were in the North, as long as there was a hospital or nursing station within reach. The meetings would be carried over the government’s telecommunications system and would link all locations together for one hour on Thursday nights at 8:00 pm.

There was plenty of excitement among the local A.A.s for the idea, along with some concern about the Traditions, particularly the question of affiliation. However, after long discussion and a period of initial planning, it was determined that the meeting would be deemed a treatment center meeting, thereby avoiding any misunderstanding. With the support of their respective local A.A. communities, on January 21, 2010, the first meeting went live connecting two sites: Thompson and Leaf Rapids.

“By the time I attended my first meeting from the Dauphin hospital a month later,” says Area 80 delegate, Pamela M., “there were six sites participating, and today we have as many as 33 sites participating on a regular basis.”

One of the more beneficial elements of these telehealth meetings, as they are referred to, is that people who are currently in treatment can see that there is a way for them to get a meeting when they get home.

“I will never forget Lorie who was in treatment in Winnipeg,” says Pamela. “She was really getting the message and excited about her recovery, but she was terrified

of going back to work in Cross Lake because she knew there was no A.A. group there. Then she attended the telehealth meeting and knew that she could also attend when she got home.

“I watched her take her one-year cake at that same meeting,” says Pamela proudly, “and Lorie has plans to start a live A.A. group there.”

Additionally, she relates one of those “A.A. coincidences” so many members are familiar with, that happened through the telecommunications meeting: “I was fortunate to have been invited to launch the first telehealth meeting in The Pas, which is about a five-hour drive from my home town of Dauphin. When I got there, I met with the director of the local treatment center. We walked across the parking lot to the local hospital with about 10 men and women who were clients of the treatment facility. As we gathered around the camera in one of the hospital meeting rooms and watched the other sites come on the screen, there was Lorie in Cross Lake — and she knew one of the women sitting next to me in The Pas and told her she was saving a seat for her when she got home. I got goose bumps!”

Sometimes, in the more populous sites, says Pamela, there are as many as 10 or 12 people gathered at the table. “And then you look to Snow Lake, Leaf Rapids and Churchill, and you see one person sitting at the table and you know that person would not be getting a meeting at all tonight without this technology, but instead he or she is sharing with 50-plus people across the province!”

“I have attended many of these meetings and at every one of them the feeling of connection over vast distances is completely awe inspiring. It seems as though a beacon of A.A. light is shining across the far north, and our hope is that newcomers will meet other newcomers through this medium and new groups will form.”



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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 Worship in your own way.



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

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

6-7—*Lexington, Kentucky.* We Have Recovered Big Book Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 11805, Lexington, KY 40578-1805

6-8—*Saint Michaels, Maryland.* MD Young At Heart People Conf. Write: Ch., Box 112, Crownsville, MD 21032; www.myhpaa.org

January

3-5—*Mankato, Minnesota.* 33rd Recovery, Unity & Svc Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2812, Minneapolis, MN 55402; altchairperson@area36.org

9-12—*Laughlin, Nevada.* 24th River Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 20326, Bullhead City, AZ 86439-0326; www.rcco-aa.org

10-12—*Dodge City, Kansas.* 44th SW Kansas Conf. Write: Ch., 2011 Campus Dr., Garden City, KS 67846; swksconf@yahoo.com

10-12—*Mahnomen, Minnesota.* 12th Wild Rice Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 203, Mahnomen, MN 56557; www.wildriceroundup.com

10-12—*South Padre Island, Texas.* Dist. 27 Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 2574, South Padre Island, TX 78597; dist27jamboree@yahoo.com

16-19—*Raleigh, North Carolina.* Tar Heel Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619-8412; www.tarheelmidwinter.org

17-19—*Annapolis, Maryland.* 3rd Annapolis Area Intergroup Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2267, Annapolis, MD 21404; www.annapolisareaintergroup.org

17-19—*Dunedin, New Zealand.* New Zealand Conv. Write: Ch., Box 6115, Dunedin, 9059, New Zealand

24-26—*Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.* 39th Hilton Head Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938; www.hiltonheadmidwinterconference.com

30-2—*Cocoa Beach, Florida.* Space Coast Round-up. Write: Ch., 720 E. New Haven Ave., #3, Melbourne, FL 32901; www.aaspacecoast.org

31-2—*Yuma, Arizona.* Yuma Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6722, Yuma, AZ 85366; www.yumaroundup.org

31-2—*El Paso, Texas.* XXX Reunión Zona Norte TX. Inf., Com. Org., Box 10325, El Paso, TX 79905

31-2—*Oostende, Belgium.* 25th North Sea Conv. Info: www.aa-europe.net

February

7-9—*Bowling Green, Kentucky.* 63rd KY State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 53, Bowling Green, KY 42102; www.kystateconvention.com

7-9—*Perrysville, Ohio.* 42nd Atwood Mid-winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 414, Findlay, OH 45840; www.atwoodconference.org

20-23—*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.* Western Canada Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

21-23—*Julian, California.* 28th Live and Let Live Lesbian Roundup. Write: Ch., 1711 Parrot St., San Diego, CA 92105

21-23—*Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.* 12th SW Unity Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3464, Lawton, OK 73502; sosconference@yahoo.com

21-23—*Round Rock, Texas.* SWTA 68 CFC Conf. Write: Ch., Box 142271, Austin, TX 78714; cfc@aa-swta.org

28-2—*French Lick, Indiana.* 61st IN State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 546, Indianapolis, IN 46206; www.area23aa.org

28-2—*Dearborn, Michigan.* Area 33 March Roundup. Write: Ch., 645 Griswold, Ste 645-111, Detroit, MI 48226; www.aa-semi.org

28-2—*Alexandria, Minnesota.* Tenth Big Ole Roundup. Info: bigoleroundup@yahoo.com

March

1-2—*Fort Lauderdale, Florida.* 1^{er} Congrès Francophone en Floride. Écrire: 920 SW 10 Ter, #R-22, Hallandale, FL 33009; congressaafioride@yahoo.ca

14-16—*Toronto, Ontario, Canada.* ON Reg. Conf. Write: Ch., 237 King St. W., #PH3, Cambridge, ON N3H 5L2; orc@aatoronto.org

21-23—*Cherry Hill, New Jersey.* 50th Area 45 Gen. Svc Conv. Write: Ch., Box 336, Rio Grande, NJ 08242-0336; www.snjaaconvention.org

28-30—*Ames, Iowa.* Aim for Ames. Write: Ch., Box 2522, Ames, IA 50010; www.aim-forames.org

28-30—*Lafayette, Louisiana.* Fellowship of the Spirit South. Write: Ch., Box 53312, Lafayette, LA 70505; www.fotssouth.com

April

4-6—*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.* Area 60 Get Away Wknd. Info: www.wpaarea60.org

4-6—*Mitchell, South Dakota.* Area 63 Spring Conf. Info: www.area63aa.org

11-13—*Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.* 26th Big Island Bash. Write: Ch., Box 390727, Kailua-Kona, HI 96739; www.bigislandbash.com

May

2-4—*Anaconda, Montana.* Area 40 Spring Roundup. Info: springroundupbutte14@yahoo.com

23-25—*San Bernardino, California.* XXXIX Conv. Hispana de CA. Inf. Com. Org., Box 926, Bloomington, CA 92316

30-1—*Gillette, Wyoming.* Area 76 Spring Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1034, Gillette, WY 82717-1034; www.aa-wyoming.org

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the Bar 4-5-9 Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. four months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to Editor: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or literature@aa.org

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20_____

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