



# AA EXCHANGE BULLETIN

NEWS AND NOTES ON ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS WORLDWIDE

VOLUME 1 Published by General Service Headquarters of A.A., P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17 NUMBER 1

## SIXTH CONFERENCE STUDIES SERVICES

### New 'Bulletin' Will Reflect A.A. Worldwide

Meet your new, monthly "A. A. Exchange Bulletin!" This new General Service Headquarters publication, which will be distributed to all groups and to lone members and Internationalists throughout the world, replaces the single-sheet "General Service Bulletin" which, in one format or another, carried Headquarters news to the movement for more than a decade.

The "Exchange Bulletin" was created to fill many requests for a concise, movement-wide publication that would combine Headquarters news, basic information on A.A. as a whole and brief accounts indicating how particular problems are being met by groups throughout the world. It is also designed to give loners, Internationalists (seamen) and groups in prisons and hospitals a *monthly forum* through which they can keep in touch with developments in their areas of A.A. activity.

The "Exchange Bulletin" is not a substitute for "The A.A. Grapevine" which, because of its greater size and different editorial approach, will continue to be the movement's international *interpretive* journal.

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### Bill on Air

Bill W., co-founder, and Eve M. of the G.S.H. staff were recent guests (anonymously, of course) on the popular "Martha Deane" radio program over Station WOR (Mutual) in New York City.

### Headquarters Briefs

#### Special Pamphlet

A brand new General Service Headquarters pamphlet, "Is A.A. for You?" is being distributed with this Bulletin. Priced at five cents per copy, it was prepared to fill a need expressed by many local groups. (Details inside.)

#### Spring Contributions

The annual Spring invitation to contribute to the support of A.A.'s worldwide service agencies was mailed to all groups in April. Response to date is encouraging. Please remember, contribution checks should be made payable to "Group Funds." (Checks for literature should be payable to "A.A. Publishing, Inc.")

#### A.A. Growth

Between January 1 and April 1 of this year, an additional 284 groups were registered at General Service Headquarters. (Other data on page 4.)

### 200 Ask GSH For Special Aid

Nearly 200 inquiry letters requiring personal answers and, in many cases, the selection and mailing of special literature, were handled at G. S. Headquarters during March.

Correspondence covered the following categories: students in colleges and high schools, 116; non-alcoholics seeking help for relatives or friends, 32; alcoholics seeking help for themselves, 12; hospital administrators, 3; teachers, 2; clergymen, 2 and industrial nursing, 1.

In addition to the U.S. and Canada, the following countries were represented in the March correspondence file: San Salvador, Chile, Colombia (2), Germany, The Netherlands, France and Yugoslavia.

### 1956 Directory Features Maps

Distribution of the largest, and possibly the most useful, A.A. "Handbook and Directory" is now under way. One copy of the 1956 edition will be sent to the General Service Representative of each group or to the Secretary in groups where a G.S.R. has not yet been selected.

A new feature this year is the inclusion of two large maps on which are superimposed figures indicating the total membership, number of local, hospital and prison groups and lone members in each area.

All who receive the "Handbook and Directory" are cautioned that it is confidential and for A.A. use only, never for use in mail solicitations.

### Delegates Meet With Trustees And GSH Staff

As this Bulletin was going to press in mid-April, 76 Delegates from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico were gathering at General Service Headquarters in New York City to review the state of A.A.'s worldwide service facilities, to discuss problems concerning the entire Fellowship and to consider ways in which A.A.'s primary purpose can be advanced in the future.

The Sixth Annual General Service Conference of A.A. had several distinctive features even before the four-day meeting opened. It was the first Conference to have a Delegate from outside the U.S. and Canada. And it was the first in which visitors representing A.A. in Europe participated as "observers."

Created on an experimental basis in 1951, the Conference serves as the link between the groups and the Trustees of A.A.'s General Service Board which acts as custodian of the Society's Tradition and service agencies. Delegates, selected at Area Assemblies, serve for a two-year period before being

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### Office Fire

Fire recently damaged the Providence, R.I. Central Service Committee Office. Fortunately, records were saved and insurance covered the property loss. How well is your Inter-group or Central Office protected?

## A.A. Tradition On Finances Under Review

Overseas, here are some recent A.A. trends and developments that have come to the attention of General Service Headquarters:

Members of a group in Southern Rhodesia are reviewing A. A. Traditions carefully, with special reference to the subject of accepting money from non-A.A. sources. In answer to a request for clarification of this Tradition, G.S.H. referred to the experience in certain areas where overseas groups originally felt it was desirable to accept grants and subsidies, only to discover that such a policy created more problems than it solved.

Introductory literature has recently been supplied to the new group at Albury, New South Wales, Australia.

Twelve new groups were registered in Finland in the 1956 Directory, bringing the current total in that country to 31, exclusive of several prison and hospital groups. Translation of the Big Book into Finnish is now under way, with the approval of the General Service Board of A.A.

Reports have been received of the recent founding of two new groups in Scotland, the "Eastern Branch" group in Glasgow and the Clydebank Group.

Dr. S. J. M., Sydney, Australia, who helped to found one of the first "non-American" groups in the world even before he realized that he was an alcoholic himself, plans to study the present development of A. A. in the U.S. in the near future. Dr. S. reports that acceptance of "Traditional A.A." has been a big factor in the "astounding progress" of A.A. in his country.

General Service Headquarters regrets that prohibitive costs make it impossible to ship literature and other materials overseas by air. The groups' cooperation, in placing orders as far in advance of the "due date" as possible, will be appreciated.

## Zig Zag

A member in Puerto Rico reports that he has sent literature to a man in Madrid at the request of a sponsor who was originally asked to cooperate by a member in Ireland who was acquainted with the sponsor through a woman member in Boston, Massachusetts.

Well, anyway, it got there!

## 'Birthday Plan' Now Spreading

The so-called "Birthday Plan" for stimulating support of A. A.'s worldwide services to alcoholics seems to be catching on. In recent months a number of groups have relayed contributions from members and a few individuals have contributed directly. Most recent contributions were from Texas and British Columbia, Canada.

Originated and tested in Oklahoma several years ago, the "Birthday Plan" is basically a suggestion that members, on each anniversary, contribute one dollar to General Service Headquarters for each year of sobriety, up to a maximum of \$10.

The Plan was favorably received by Delegates to the Fifth Conference last year. The Conference approved a Finance Committee report suggesting that Delegates "who care to" might develop the Plan in their home areas.

## Braille 'Big Book' Available Now

G.S.H. recently received a request for a copy of "Alcoholics Anonymous" in Braille.

A.A. does not have its own edition of the Big Book in Braille but a copy may be borrowed by mail from the Library for the Blind, 137 West 23rd Street, New York 1, N. Y. It is issued in six volumes.

The library is one of the 26 regional agencies designated by the Federal Government to assist sightless readers.

## Group Queries Mention Sponsorship, Clubhouses, Intergroups and Gifts

Following are some of the questions relating to group policy and practice that have been referred to General Service Headquarters recently. G. S.H. staff members never prescribe a specific solution to a local problem. Instead, they attempt to pass along to the inquiring group the benefit of experience reported elsewhere. Hence, if your group has a problem, or if your members feel certain experience may be helpful to other groups, do not hesitate to write to Service Headquarters.

Q. Should newcomers be encouraged to "shop around" for a sponsor or should the problem be handled by a group sponsorship committee.

A. A number of groups have reconciled these two approaches by careful review of the pamphlet, "Sponsorship," and through one or more meetings exclusively on the subject. The Second Tradition has a helpful bearing, too.

Q. Our Central Office, which conducts meetings for beginners, is housed in an "Alano" Club. Some of us feel the atmosphere is not the best for newcomers and want to separate. Others think the clubhouse location excellent. What is the best procedure?

A. The section on "Clubs in A.A." in the A.A. Tradition pamphlet covers this situation rather pertinently, particularly on page 51. This material reflects a great deal of experience with this problem.

Q. My non-alcoholic boss likes A.A. and wants to give our group a (non-monetary) gift we need. Some in the group feel we should not accept it. What should we do?

A. Bill has pointed out that very often the key factor is whether or not there is "a string attached" to a friendly gift of this type. It might also be considered ungracious to refuse a "token" of a non-member's appreciation. Page 38 of the Tradition pamphlet may suggest an answer to you.

Q. In our Intergroup area there is an informal Discussion Group made up of members from various groups; it has no secretary or formal structure although they pay rental at our club and contribute to the Intergroup. Since all members already belong to other groups, should this Discussion group be entitled to have a voting representative at Intergroup meetings?

A. This is a completely local problem which, it appears, can be resolved only by the Intergroup Committee itself. In cases of this type, most A.A. members do not hesitate to put the problem to a vote of the local committee, prepared to accept the decision of the majority.

Q. We have recently incorporated a so-called Twelfth Step House. In writing the by-laws, some directors want to require that membership in our facility be limited to A.A. members. Others feel we would violate the Sixth Tradition if we permit the A.A. name to be used, if only in by-laws, in a related facility.

A. Our group experience and Tradition are overwhelmingly on the side of *not* using the A.A. name in the by-laws described.

### G. S. H. STAFF

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## Earlier Contact Approved for Prison Group

### New Prison Groups

Vaca-Valley TB Group  
Calif. Medical Facility  
Vacuville, Calif.

State Penitentiary  
Menard, Illinois

House of Good Shepherd  
Boston, Massachusetts

Poreupine Mountain

Trusty Camp

Ontonagon, Michigan

Grove Street Group

Somerset County Jail

Somerville, N. J.

New Hope Group

Correctional Institution.

Marion, Ohio

Chambersburg Jail  
Chambersburg, Penna.

Members of the A.A. Group in the U. S. Penitentiary at McNeil Island, Washington, recently received permission to extend their activities to include the Admission and Orientation Unit of the prison, Ted G., secretary reports.

Normally, new inmates are held in "A and O." for 30 days, prior to assignment to a specific unit, and are not permitted to mix with the general prison population, hence unable to learn of A.A. Under the arrangement recently approved by the new Associate Warden, Mr. M. S. Richmond, three members of A.A. are now able to address the newcomers and distribute literature.

If the new man wants to know more about the program, he merely signs his name to a mimeographed sheet that is forwarded to the group. Later, a member of the group interviews the newcomer privately.

The group in the Marion (Ohio) Correctional Institution, formerly a branch of the Ohio Penitentiary group, is now registered at G.S.H.

Jack L., secretary of the Inside-Out Group, Atlanta (Georgia) Penitentiary, reports that the group is looking ahead to its 12th anniversary next September. A special "transitional" sponsorship program is running "under a full head of steam here," he notes.

## 'Desire to Join' Is Only Requirement for Membership In 4 Out of 5 Prison Groups, G. S. H. Survey Indicates

Rigid "screening" is becoming a thing of the past and today four out of five inmate alcoholics can join an institutional group simply by expressing a desire to be a member.

This encouraging trend toward acceptance of "Traditional" A.A. concepts by inmates and penologists alike is one of the highlights of an informal survey recently conducted by General Service Headquarters. Brief questionnaires were mailed to 278 inmate groups. Returns were received from 92 institutions; 56 were classified as maximum security prisons, 21, medium security and 15 as minimum security.

Only 18 percent of the maximum security prisons and 15 percent of those in the medium security classification weigh such "extra" factors as a man's record or type of offense in determining whether he will be admitted to an A.A. group, according to the survey.

## New Folder Asks 'Is AA for You?'

As requested by the General Service Conference, a new pamphlet, "Is A.A. for You?" has just been made available for general distribution by G.S. Headquarters. Priced at five cents a copy, the new literature item is designed primarily to help a person determine, for himself, whether or not he has an alcoholic problem.

The folder features twelve test questions based on the experience of a representative group of members who have studied patterns of progressive drinking over a period of many years. Each question calls for a "Yes" or "No" answer. If a person answers "Yes" to even four questions, it is suggested that he may be on, or over, the borderline that separates normal from compulsive drinking.

A sample copy of the folder is enclosed.

"First Things First"

## INSTITUTIONAL

Screening, whether formal or informal, is handled by institution officials in 52 per cent of the maximum security facilities and in 33 per cent of the medium security correctional units.

A.A. group members themselves do the "screening" in 19 per cent of the maximum security prisons and in 13 per cent of those ranked "medium security."

Institutional officials and group members *jointly interview* "prospects" in 29% of the maximum security installations. This procedure is followed in 54 per cent of the medium security institutions.

All but two of the 92 reporting groups said that the "Twelve Traditions" have been discussed at meetings. Seventy five groups indicated they have accepted the Traditions as "guid-

ing principles" in inmate A.A. operations. A majority of the groups have special Traditions meetings during the Thanksgiving season, they reported.

Comments accompanying the returned questionnaires made it clear that some form of screening is considered desirable in a small percentage of inmate groups.

"Without screening, we probably would not have a group going here at present," one secretary wrote. "Many came to scoff or to belittle the program and we had to limit our help to those men who were sincere in wanting to do something about their problem."

The prevalent attitude seemed to be expressed in the following note, also from a maximum security prison:

"In giving each man a right to say for himself if he needs or does not need A.A. we find that he does not feel like he is being weighed-in. . ."

## INTERNATIONALISTS

*Phil R. is a fairly recent newcomer to A.A. now working aboard an oil tanker off our East Coast. His letter reflects a problem common to old-timer Internationalists, too:*

So far have not yet been able to get to a meeting but, running coastwise, I have a good chance of making one soon, perhaps Philadelphia about seven days from now. Not being able to get to meetings often, I really know the meaning of living one day at a time. It is the only way I can hold the program.

Sometimes I ask the Man upstairs two or three times in one day to help me through the day. Another important thing for me is Step Number Three. I realize I cannot make the program by myself (especially out here) so I try to turn my life over to the care of a Greater Power. If I didn't have Him to turn to, I don't know what I would do.

## New 'Bulletin' Serves All A. A.

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General Service Representatives and Group Secretaries are urged to let Service Headquarters know how the "Bulletin" can be increasingly useful in group affairs. Due to obvious space limitations, only subjects of broad general interest can be covered. It is hoped, however, that space can be found for listings of group anniversaries *in multiples of five years* and for advance notices of major meetings and conferences. Such information should reach the editor at least three weeks prior to publication date.

Eighty "outside" A.A. members from 14 groups, including several persons who drove 160 miles to attend, were among the guests who helped the St. Peter (Minnesota) Hospital Group celebrate its second anniversary recently.

## Two's A Crowd At Meetings In Far East

Lucille G., on Formosa with her Army husband, describes a heart-warming A.A. "reunion" in the following excerpt from a recent letter:

Had gone to bed early Friday when I got a telephone call from Ed. F., from one of the cargo ships just arrived in port. He had gotten my number from M. .... I was so happy to have some one to talk to. I got dressed and went down to meet him and a friend of his who has been on the program ten months. We sat and talked A.A. for about two hours. It was wonderful. How I did enjoy it!

He was easy to talk to. Said he had spent an hour or so with M. that afternoon at the base and that they had talked A.A. Ed will be back in town tonight so we are going to have a meeting at my house. I can hardly wait. Some one else took the call so don't know if M. is coming or not!

## In Japan

Trudi H., another A.A. Army wife, is a lone member in Nagoya, Japan, and one of our most faithful correspondents:

The main thing that has happened is that I got a letter from another loner, Bob B., in Osaka. He comes to Nagoya weekends, with a Japanese girl he plans to marry as soon as the paper work goes through. She seems very understanding; her father died of alcoholism.

Bob has been sober ten years I plan to contact one of the chaplains (to try to get a group started) when Bob gets back from ten days in Korea. Am so happy that Bob contacted me. I'll feel much more at ease in going to the chaplains. When Bob gets married, he won't be here every weekend, so I'll have to get things moving as fast as I can.

## A.A. Worldwide - 1956

BASED ON DATA REPORTED TO GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

6,249 GROUPS \* 135,905 MEMBERS

(With all 'unreported' A.A.s, Total may be 200,000.)

|                                    |           |        |
|------------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| 4,610 Groups in U. S. A.           | - - - - - | 93,824 |
| 574 Groups in Canada               | - - - - - | 9,517  |
| 564 Groups outside U.S.A. & Canada | - - - - - | 14,143 |
| 211 Hospital Groups                | - - - - - | 4,956  |
| 182 in U.S. (4440)                 |           |        |
| 9 in Canada (120)                  |           |        |
| 20 in other areas (396)            |           |        |
| 290 Prison Groups                  | - - - - - | 13,056 |
| 248 in U.S. (11,953)               |           |        |
| 26 in Canada (801)                 |           |        |
| 16 in other areas (302)            |           |        |
| Lone Members                       | - - - - - | 290    |
| Internationalists                  | - - - - - | 119    |

| "SPECIAL" GROUPS | U.S.A.     | Can. | Foreign | Total |
|------------------|------------|------|---------|-------|
| Women's          | - - - - 88 | 6    | 3       | 97    |
| Young Peoples    | - - - - 30 | 5    | 1       | 36    |
| Intergroups      | - - - - 73 | 15   | 19      | 107   |
| Armed Forces     | - - - - 3  | 6    | 21      | 30    |
| "Twelfth Step"   | - - - - 8  | 0    | 0       | 8     |
| TB Hospital      | - - - - 18 | 1    | 0       | 19    |

## Hospital Endorses A.A. To Spouses

Many A.A. members working with hospital groups throughout the country will be interested in the careful planning and development of special letters that have gone into Warren State (Penna.) Hospital Group's campaign to encourage relatives of alcoholics to participate more fully in patients' recovery.

Form letters have been developed for the following purposes:

1. To thank visiting groups.
2. To let a non-alcoholic know that a relative has been invited to take part in A.A. meetings, that the Hospital "strongly endorses" A.A. and to invite the relative to take part in the meetings also.
3. To solicit A.A. speakers for meetings.
4. To let a relative know that a patient is eligible to join A.A. after completing the initial phase of his hospitalization, but pointing out that the decision must be the alcoholic's alone.
5. To let a local group know that an A.A. patient from the group's area is being discharged and to urge that a sponsorship contact be established.

## Conference

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"rotated." Trustees and key headquarters staff people are also members of the Conference.

Following five years of successful experimentation, a permanent charter for the Conference was approved unanimously by the movement at the A.A. Convention in St. Louis last Summer.

Complete summaries of Conference proceedings will be carried in the June issue of the "Exchange Bulletin." Interpretive reports will also appear in "The A.A. Grapevine."

Membership in the Brighter Tomorrow Group in the Jefferson City (Missouri) State Penitentiary has risen from 30 to more than 100 in six months, according to Jack F., secretary. The group is planning to revive its magazine and asks that other inmate editors keep the B. T. Group on their mailing lists.

"Easy Does It"

## Lauds Groups For Sponsorship In Minnesota

### New Groups

Keeley Institute  
Dwight, Illinois  
State Infirmary  
Tewksbury, Mass.  
Metropolitan Hospital  
New York, N. Y.  
State Sanatorium  
South Mountain, Pa.  
V. A. Hospital  
Tomah, Wisconsin  
Sunbury Hospital  
Sydney, N. S. Wales  
Australia

A.A. groups have been "very helpful" in sponsoring patients when they are released from Willmar (Minnesota) State Hospital, M. E. Brandes, Counselor on alcoholism, declares in a letter to G.S.H. Willmar now has about 220 alcoholic patients and is admitting new ones at the rate of approximately 120 per month, the average stay being 60 days.

The hospital, which includes four A.A. counselors on its staff, has been working closely with groups throughout the state for the past five years. Tuesday night meetings are presented by selected A.A. speakers from various groups while the Saturday night sessions feature a speaking team from a single group or squad.

Niagara Frontier A.A. Groups are debtly indebted for the fine cooperation of Dr. Sarkis J. Anthony and his staff at Buffalo's E. J. Meyer Memorial Hospital, George E., hospital chairman for the groups reported last month.

The problem of what to do for some discharged alcoholics still remains, George says, adding that perhaps 20% of the patients are without resources of any kind.

The hospital chairman has estimated that if five per cent of the total could be saved from another trip through the efforts of A.A., the supporting agency for the hospital would benefit to the extent of approximately \$4,500 a year.