

## 57 Years! —A Day At a Time

His name is Muir 'Easy' E., he says he's the "oldest sober drunk who got sober in Florida," and this November he celebrates 57 years of continuous sobriety in A.A.

Back in 1941, Easy was a 28-year-old drunk who was just managing to get to work most days. When the Jack Alexander article about the Fellowship appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, he relates, "my mother slipped it under my door and I read it, but it didn't take." Finally his wife, Katharine, had had enough. She packed up their three children and moved to Florida to be near her mother. Filled with remorse, Easy obtained a copy of the Big Book from a local church and "read it straight through," he recalls. "I then phoned my wife and told her about the A.A. book. She said, 'If this is the way you want to live, it will be fine with me.'"

Easy then joined Katharine and the children and, armed with a letter of reference from his previous employer, sought work at a local gas company. But there was a caveat: "He'll be all right if he doesn't drink," the letter stated. "So they gave me the job with a no-drinking proviso," Easy says, "and I stayed dry for 18 months on my own. But no A.A. I couldn't stand it any longer and picked up a drink, then another and another. My wife called A.A. on November 15, 1942, and I attended my first meeting. The rest is history."

Now retired and living in Montgomery, Alabama, Easy is in "the same house my wife picked out in 1961." She died in 1984, but Easy is surrounded by caring family and friends. "In 1941," he says, "my life was unmanageable. I'd lost my family, owed everybody money, was practically unemployable and on top of that, wrecked my car. Today I lead a good life, and I have a 50-year safe driving award." He can be found on most Monday nights at a meeting of his home group, the Downtown Group, and on Tuesdays at a meeting of the Twelve Steps Group. He also gets great satisfaction out of working with newcomers. "I make lots of home visits," he notes.

How did he get the nickname Easy? "After I sobered up in A.A., it was given to me by my company's sales department," he explains with a grin. "They said it was because my conduct had changed from 'flash' to 'easy.'"

## The Most Unforgettable Character I Have Ever Met

"Keep your eyes peeled for a Mini-Class A-25-foot-R.V. You may be passing Pat D. traveling to a Regional or Special Forum or an A.A. roundup or convention. He is on the road five to six months of the year. Pat is one of the most unforgettable characters I have ever met. Among his many sayings: 'If you are in love with A.A., you are in love with service.' 'Service nurtures spiritual growth.' 'General Service is about work and self-sacrifice for others.' 'A.A.s work together collectively without thinking about themselves which creates real spiritual energy.'"



*Pat takes a break and checks the map before hitting the road to next A.A. event.*

"Pat D., past delegate, Panel 43, Area 15 (South Florida), travels almost half the year in his R.V., planning his road trips around Regional and Special Forums. You will see him in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and then he will go iceberg hunting in Labrador and on to a Labor Day roundup in Stettler, Alberta. He plans to attend the Arkansas State Convention in the Ozarks and then will go to a roundup in Western Canada. After that, you will see him at the West Central Regional Forum in Sheridan, Wyoming, and then he is off to a Special Forum in Window Rock, Arizona, in October. Pat tries to park his R.V. in the parking lots of the hotels where the events are held. He plans to end up in Florida by October 28th to lead a workshop on sponsorship, service and carrying the

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A.A. message enthusiastically. Pat has been sober 30 years and plans to work a few months to pay for his travels the rest of the year. Then it's back on the road again for next year's round of A.A. events.

"Pat's R.V. is most compact—25-feet, with all the comforts of home. He has photos of his friends on the ceiling and walls, along with maps, *Box 4-5-9s* giving dates of conventions, and a Regional/Special Forum schedule. His being one of the most unforgettable characters I have ever meet is partly due to his great love of Alcoholics Anonymous. He lives the program around the clock. Pat's enthusiasm is catching and so is his humor which makes sober living fun."—*Anonymous*

**Note:** Check the 2000 Regional Forum schedule on page 6.

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## Happy Birthday, West Coast A.A.!

On November 21, 1939, the first A.A. meeting on the West Coast was held in a room at San Francisco's Clift Hotel. (Just 28 days later, on December 19, the first A.A. meeting in Los Angeles took place in a private home.) Reported the November 1998 issue of *The Point*, the newsletter of the Intercounty Fellowship in San Francisco: "At the invitation of Ray W., a New York member who was in the Bay Area for a sales course, three other men showed up: Ted C., Dave L. and Don B." Their names, among others he called in vain, had been given to Ray by the Alcoholic Foundation (now the General Service Office) before he left for California.

A.A. co-founder Bill W. vividly describes the historic meeting in *A.A. Comes of Age* (pp. 87-88): "Ray had been

an atheist and he still stuck to it. . . . He said, 'Now, boys, this A.A. is great stuff. It really saved my life. But there's one feature of it I don't like. I mean this God business. So when you read this book [the Big Book], you can skip that part of it.' Ten days later, Ray was on his way back East, leaving a shivering and divided group in his wake." But, Bill continues, they soon found two wonderful non-alcoholic friends—Mrs. Gordon Oram and Dr. Percy Poliak, a psychiatrist who had been impressed with A.A. after seeing it at work in New York's Bellevue Hospital—friends who gave their full support.

Several more people joined the fledgling group and it held together somehow, but "at this stage there was plenty of slipping and backsliding," Bill says. "From New York we began writing letters to San Francisco, but the replies were sketchy and uncertain. At the end of a year an alky lady appeared at our New York office on Vesey Street. She was a little tight, and crying. Though of course she exaggerated a bit, she said, 'Bill, we've been going a whole year in San Francisco, and do you know that at Christmas time we were all drunk.'"

The tale has a happy, and sober, conclusion. "Only a few years later, in 1951," as Bill tells it, "the Lasker Award [presented by the American Public Health Association in recognition of A.A.'s "unique and highly successful approach to that age-old public health and social problem, alcoholism"] was given to A.A. in the San Francisco Opera House. On the night following the award presentation there was an A.A. meeting, and the huge place was packed. Sober alcoholics were practically hanging from the rafters. What once looked like a mighty poor acorn had produced a great oak."

Sixty years later, that great oak still stands tall, spreading its branches wide and sheltering thousands of sick alcoholics who need help.

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## Loner Finds a Worldwide Safety Net

"I am an alcoholic living in Kannami, Japan, and I could really use some help. When I came here some months ago, I found that the favorite pastime for both the Japanese and foreigners was drinking. It had been my dream to live here since I first got sober in A.A. about eight years ago and started practicing karate. Well, the karate has been wonderful, but not much else. At first I turned down all drinking invitations, but at some point the insanity returned. Then I drank."

New Loner Casey H. located G.S.O. New York on the Tokyo A.A. Internet home page. His candid e-mailed letter in the Sept.-Oct. issue of *LIM (Loners-Interna-*

*tionalists Meeting*), published by the General Service Office, ruefully noted that "my history in A.A. is far from perfect." Before relocating to Japan, he explained, "I had two-and-a-half years' sobriety and felt fairly secure in my recovery. But repetitive relapses seem to be my specialty. Right now I'm a newcomer, and A.A. meetings are not easily accessible to me. Maybe someone out there can help me—or, at least, maybe my experience can help someone else to avoid the mistakes I've made."

It is the Fellowship's goal that "when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help," the hand of A.A. will be there, and Casey H. was no exception. No sooner did his plea reach G.S.O., then Loner contacts were found. "After my writing for help," he says, "it wasn't a coincidence that I opened my e-mail one afternoon, still hurting and hung over from a drunk the previous night, only to find at least a dozen messages from A.A.s here in Asia and other countries. I have not had a drink since."

Casey says that he is "trying to focus not so much on why I came here so ill prepared and believed the lie that I could drink again as I am on how to stay sober for today. I had been trying to do this by myself, and of course I couldn't. I am full of gratitude for all the support I've received from A.A.s who didn't even know me."

For some time, he says, he was blaming the drinking culture in Japan for his own inability to stay sober. He has since come to realize, however, that "alcoholism has no respect for culture, race, language or creed. It is an equal opportunity offender."

Recently, "when I had about a month's sobriety under my belt," Casey adds, "a man I train karate with invited me to his house to show me some of his antique *katanas*, or swords. He then gave me a *tsuba*—the guard near the handle of the *katana*—made in Kyoto about 200 years ago and really beautiful. On it were some symbols, including one in the shape of a triangle inside a circle. It reminded me at once of A.A., and I couldn't help but think it was God's way of giving me a 30-day token . . . definitely a blessing in disguise."

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## 2000 International Convention Goes On-line

For us amateurs, in-line refers to roller skating. On-line refers to the speed and benefits of the Internet.

For the first time, an A.A. International Convention is communicating information and processing registration and housing requests through G.S.O.'s A.A. Web Site. Look us up at <<[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)>> as this Web Site helps us to join together to "Pass It On—Into the 21st Century."

## Sponsorship: a Vital Link in the A.A. Chain of Recovery

He might spin out a yarn indefinitely, but A.A. co-founder Bill W. also could cut to the chase. "Every sponsor is a leader," he noted tersely in Concept IX. "The stakes are about as big as they could be. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance."

Sponsorship—one (sober) drunk humbly sharing his experience, strength and hope with another—is key to the recovery of the individual alcoholic and to the unity and survival of the group and the entire Fellowship. Speaking at the 1991 General Service Conference on the theme "Sponsorship: Gratitude in Action," former Southern Indiana delegate Dorothy M. said, "When a newcomer reaches out for help, I want the hand of a member who's willing to be a sponsor right there." She emphasized that "our bonding stems not so much from having shared a common disaster as from our sharing in the common solution."

The 1998 A.A. Membership Survey reveals that 75 percent of members have a sponsor, and 68 percent of those obtained a sponsor within their first 90 days in the Fellowship (*Bar 4-5-9*, Aug.-Sept. 1999). Mail and phone calls received by the General Service Office show that A.A.s are committing to sponsorship in greater numbers than ever—but that many are uncertain just how to go about it. Their letters contain a variety of questions (some answered in the pamphlet "Questions & Answers on Sponsorship"). Following are some of these, along with responses provided by the collective experience of A.A.

**Q.** *What in general are the challenges and rewards of sponsorship?*

**A.** The ultimate value of sponsorship is whether or not it is effective on both sides. This does not mean that sponsors will be successful every time, but if they are diligent in their efforts, the number of cases of lasting sobriety in which they have played a part will grow. Most important, the sponsor will stay sober. Comments a New York City A.A.: "For me the biggest challenge in sponsoring is coming to understand that I'm only one channel to the A.A. way of life, and that my experience may not apply to all. It wasn't easy for me to accept that I'm not an 'overseer' of anybody's sobriety."

**Q.** *Do you try to get a sponsee involved with A.A.'s Twelve Steps right away, or do you move more slowly?*

**A.** No rules apply here; each person is different. An Ohio A.A. reports, "I'm apt to move more slowly than some. Particularly with someone new to A.A., I stress getting connected to the Fellowship through a home group and

regular contact with me and other A.A. members before going seriously into the Steps.” Another member, from Colorado, sees it differently: “My job as sponsor is to help another alcoholic have his own experience in recovery, not mine. Usually I meet with a prospective sponsee, tell my story and how I could not stay sober until experiencing our Steps and A.A. way of life—so we’re off and running. Also, I believe that sponsorship is not about being buddies; it’s a one-to-one relationship between two alcoholics growing as equals, at their own pace and time. I tell my guys I’m willing to love them enough to be the one person in their lives to tell them the truth. I assure them that those with whom I experience the Steps often are some of my closest friends, but the sponsorship role comes first.”

**Q.** *Do you ever say no when asked to sponsor someone? If so, for what reason or in what circumstance would you do so?*

**A.** A member who summed up the experience of many says, “I haven’t had to say no directly. But a couple of times I was asked to sponsor someone just when I’d started working with someone else, and I didn’t feel I could do both people justice. I think the most important thing we can give sponsees is time, and if I don’t have any more to give, I try to steer the new person to an A.A. who does.”

**Q.** *A fellow A.A.’s sponsor has moved away or perhaps died. The member has some years of sobriety and asks you to sponsor him. How do you proceed?*

**A.** In such circumstances, offers a longtime A.A., “I assume that the sponsee has experience in living without a drink one day at a time. Most often these people are accustomed to using a sponsor for guidance and/or shared experience. Occasionally, though, I’ve been surprised to find that a new sponsee with several years of sobriety has not been involved with the Steps. This gives me an opportunity to share about the benefits of incorporating the Steps in my life.”

**Q.** *How vigorously do you encourage the newcomer sponsee to become familiar with the Traditions and get involved in service?*

**A.** Experience varies. Many A.A.s report that they proceed with caution. Notes one: “Just as we may ruin a future chance at sobriety for practicing alcoholics by pushing A.A. too hard before they are ready, so can we spoil people for general service by pushing them into it before they are ready. Once they reach a solid plateau in recovery, I introduce general service as a way to take their sobriety to the next level. Usually the Traditions come up more informally in sharing about experiences at meetings.” Another A.A. agrees, adding, “While I don’t push newcomer sponsees to get into service, I often invite them to accompany me to service functions, which might lead them to want to participate. In any

event, I share the Traditions and Concepts and suggest they read *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*.

**Q.** *A sponsee’s “problems other than alcohol” can be intense. Do you go beyond the Steps in offering guidance?*

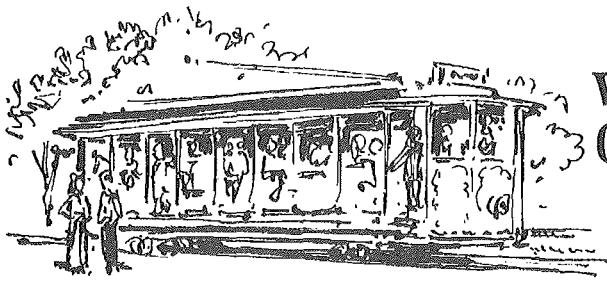
**A.** Most members share with their sponsees any experience they’ve had with such a problem or else try to introduce them to someone with whom they can identify and be helped. In some instances, another self-help group or professional help is also suggested. As one member volunteered, “Years of experience have taught me I’m not God. I stay out of the roles of doctor, therapist, marriage counselor. Rather than focus on our differences, I try to help these sponsees discover if they are alcoholics and are willing to try our solution.”

**Q.** *A sponsee insists on identifying himself as “an alcoholic and a something else.” What do you say or do, if anything?*

**A.** Explains an Ohio A.A.: “When I’ve sponsored people who introduced themselves as alcoholics and something else, I’d tell them that whatever else they are besides alcoholic doesn’t matter to A.A. and needn’t be mentioned because the only thing it does is separate them from A.A.s who don’t share the problem.” Concurring, another member says, “Early in sobriety I let them know I was unique—more than just a garden variety alcoholic. But I soon learned that when I separated myself from other members in the group, I hampered my ability to be truly useful to the newcomer, who was my big hope of staying sober. So today I try to help my sponsees to get over their own uniqueness and try the A.A. way.”

**Q.** *If, after a time, sponsees remain determined to do things their way rather than be guided by the Steps, the Big Book and you, how patient are you? Do you let them go or hold the door open?*

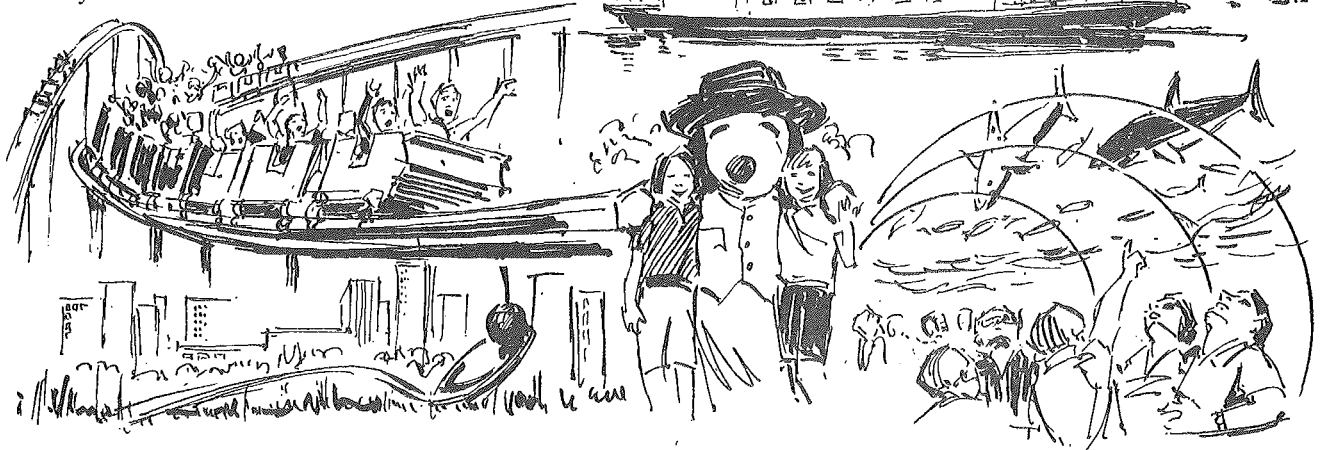
**A.** Most A.A.s agree that there is little sponsors can do except assure the newcomer of their willingness to help, when and if needed. Sponsorship is a flexible venture, and good sponsors are themselves flexible in working with new people. It is just as much a mistake to thrust unwanted help upon a newcomer as it is to refuse help when a newcomer asks for it. However, as one member replied, “The truth? When my sponsees go off and do their own inexperienced thing, it usually makes me madder than hell! But, seriously, I’ve had to let many of these sponsees move on. I usually let them know that I feel unable to help them anymore, and I encourage them to find another sober alcoholic who can help them get to where they need to go. But I rarely close the door; I don’t believe that’s what God would have me do. I make a point of talking to my own sponsor before taking action, and I try to follow the directions in ‘Working with Others’ (Big Book, Chapter 7). With some, it is best to let them go, remain friendly and direct my efforts to someone who is seeking our solution.”



## What to Do With Your Kids (or Yourself) At Minneapolis 2000

As most of us know too well, alcoholism is a family illness. But, miraculously, as we alcoholics recover in A.A., our spouses, significant others and kids get better right along with us. With that in mind, thousands of A.A.s across the world—and an impressive turnout of Al-Anons—are planning to celebrate sobriety as a family at A.A.'s International Convention from Thursday, June 29 to Sunday, July 2, 2000. To ensure maximum enjoyment, now is the time to start planning fun activities that the whole family can enjoy. From the arts to athletics and colorful sights and spectacles, the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul offer a variety of cultural and recreational activities indoors and out. Following are some of the fun ways you and your kids (big and little) can make A.A.'s 65th birthday party an exciting and heartwarming family vacation:

- Look through a glass sharky at Underwater World—a 1.2-million-gallon aquarium at the Mall of America, where you can also shop for togs and toys . . . make your own teddy bear at the Brown Bear Company . . . take a plunge on Paul Bunyan's Log Chute at Knott's Camp Snoopy . . . and ride an enormous, seven-story Ferris wheel *inside*.
- Canoe down Minnehaha Creek and view the fabulous Minnehaha Falls, said to have inspired Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to write *Song of Hiawatha*.
- Ride a renovated steamboat, the Minnehaha Streetcar Steamboat, on Lake Minnetonka.
- Talk to a tyrannosaurus at the Minnesota Zoo's "Dinopolis" exhibit.
- See the past come alive at historical Fort Snelling.
- Hop aboard the Minneapolis River City trolley for an historical tour.
- Brave the Wild Thing hypercoaster at Valleyfair Family Amusement Park.
- Float down the Mississippi on a Padelford boat cruise.
- Check out the planets at the Minnesota Library's Planetarium.
- Skate at Twin Cities' only indoor park—Edinborough—featuring a playground, picnic area, swimming pool and amphitheater.
- Fish for compliments *and* your supper. Catch and eat your own fish at Trout Air Fish Farm in Columbus township.
- Create a thunderstorm at the Minnesota Children's Museum in St. Paul.
- Fly a kite and visit the free zoo at St. Paul's Como Park.
- Join a beach volleyball game at Lake Calhoun.
- Soak in some small-town atmosphere at the Hopkins Raspberry Festival. (To get to Hopkins, you can catch a city bus in downtown Minneapolis.)
- Rent in-line skates in Uptown, then glide around scenic Lake Calhoun and Lake of the Isles.
- Cross the Mississippi on foot by walking across Stone Arch Bridge.
- Play at Chutes and Ladders Children's Amusement Park in Highland Park.
- Play softball in one of 170 parks in Minneapolis, where the sport originated 100 years ago.
- Treat yourself to a super double-scooper at Sebastian Joe's, Minneapolis's famous ice cream parlor.
- Help us kick off the Convention by enjoying the rollicking block party right outside the Convention Center and all along Nicollet Mall, on Thursday night, June 29th.



## Regional Forums in 2000

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service, by providing an opportunity for A.A. group and area representatives, as well as any interested individual A.A.s 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. These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas in better carrying the message through service work.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum are sent to G.S.R.s, area committee members, delegates, and central offices and intergroups, approximately three months ahead of time. The final Forums in 1999 will be: Special Forum, October 9, Sports Complex, Window Rock, Arizona; Southwest, December 3-5, Holiday Inn Lubbock Plaza, Lubbock, Texas. In 2000 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *Western Canada*—February 18-20; Best Western Richmond Inn, Richmond, British Columbia
- *Pacific*—August 25-27; Burbank Hilton, Burbank, California
- *Eastern Canada*—September 8-10; Ambassador Hotel, Kingston, Ontario
- *Southeast*—November 17-19; Best Western Gateway, Huntington, West Virginia

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## How Do You Celebrate Your A.A. Birthday?

There may be as many ways in which A.A.s celebrate an anniversary as there are members. Some mark the milestone at their group's monthly anniversary meetings, some visit the group in which they first sobered up, and others enjoy quiet one-to-one observances with their sponsors, to mention a few of the ways. As letters to the General Service Office show, however, there is a universal urge among A.A.s grateful for their sobriety to "give away what I've received," as Floridian Dorothy K. observes. And although fall has long been known for its "Gratitude Months"—October in Canada, November in the U.S.—an overwhelming number of members, along with many of our friends outside the Fellowship, find their own special ways to say, "Thank you, A.A.," all year long.

Californian Michael H. writes that his group celebrates A.A. birthdays with all the trimmings, especially

first birthdays. "It can produce butterflies in the solar plexus, wondering what to say up in front of all those people," Michael relates. "I was given special words that first anniversary night—words I've repeated often because there are always new ears to hear them: 'This is a celebration of the power of our program to keep a drunk sober for one year.'"

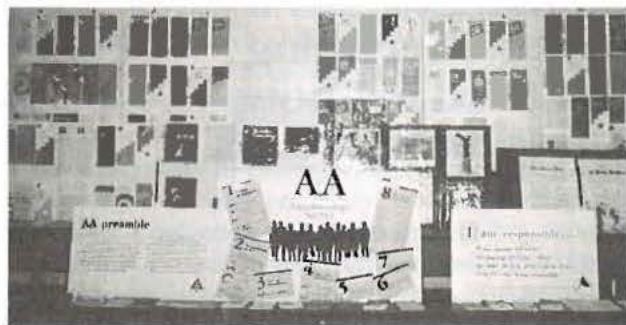
Looked at that way, says Michael, who celebrated 19 years of sobriety last March, "the birthday becomes a time to share my gratitude for the program and say 'thank you for another year of my life' to the A.A.s who were here when I arrived and passed on to me what they had been given. I really do owe my life to this program, so I grab every chance I can to blow out the candles on a cake and express my gratitude for being where I am today."

To mark their birthdays, some A.A.s, like Michael, "pass the previous year's chips along, either to individuals or to a group that gives them out." Others celebrate by sending in a gratitude gift to their intergroup or to G.S.O. for its world services—usually a dollar or two for each sober year. One Canadian group follows this Birthday Plan by collecting contributions from members throughout the year, or until the number of dollars matches the members' total years of sobriety. On the group's birthday, these funds are sent to G.S.O. as a birthday contribution.

A.A. co-founder Bill W. wrote that "when brimming with gratitude, one's heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion we can ever know." (Grapevine, March 1962) Which is why gratitude is easily converted into action, individual or group. Some A.A. groups hold topic meetings on the subject of gratitude, send money to fund the A.A. service of their choice (such as literature for treatment centers) or donate a year's subscription to the Grapevine to someone homebound or in prison. Other groups may make beginners kits available and spend time stuffing envelopes with a meeting book, address book and pencil, a copy of *Living Sober* and several A.A. pamphlets. Individual A.A.s may invite a sponsor or sponsee to lunch, or start a Step or Traditions meeting where the need exists. Or, they may make it a point to greet newcomers and out-of-towners who show up at their home-group meetings.

Gratitude would be a cold, high-sounding word if not for the fact that it rarely travels without its close companions—understanding, humor, joy and love. At anniversary celebrations, especially, these emotions intermix and run high. Bill W. called them "rare gifts that have their true origin in our kinship born of a common suffering and a common deliverance. . . ." And if we A.A.s laugh merrily over the telling of a wretched experience from the past, Bill said, well why not? We are recovering from alcoholism "and have been given the power to help others. What greater cause could there be for rejoicing than this?" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 132)

## Have literature, will travel



Carl S., literature chairperson for Area 81 (New Brunswick/P.E.I.), sent us this photo of a literature display that was set up in a prison. Area 81's literature committee sets up displays at various A.A. events, and reports they always receive a good response.

## Correctional Facilities

### Letters Are a Lifeline To the A.A. 'Inside'

For Todd, an inmate in a Southwest prison, correspondence with an A.A. on the outside has kindled hope and a sense of belonging to A.A. "My good friend Tom has been helping me in a lot of ways to deal with my alcoholism," Todd writes, "and to understand that I am responsible for what I have done."

Todd doesn't remember the accident that catapulted him into prison. "It happened the day after Christmas

1995. I drove off to work on a day I didn't need to be there, just to catch up on some minor chore. I hadn't had a drink since being released from jail in '94, so I was sober. I had a real bad toothache, so I bought a half pint of whiskey for the pain. I was only going to rinse my mouth out, but suddenly it seemed I'd downed the entire bottle in a few swallows. About 20 minutes later, I can't be sure, I passed out and hit a car with two people in it head-on. I've no recollection of the accident, but I went to trial and was found guilty of aggravated assault. I was sentenced to nine years in prison."

Today "the pain and suffering I feel for the people I injured in the other car can be overwhelming," Todd says, "and it doesn't go away. It was even worse before I wrote to G.S.O. asking for help in getting a sponsor, and they found Tom to correspond with me. I am so sorry for what happened and hope that with the help of Tom and A.A., someday those I've hurt will see the change in me."

Todd and Tom met through G.S.O.'s Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.), in which A.A.s on the outside offer to correspond with fellow members inside jails and prisons. Every month the Correctional Facilities desk at G.S.O. receives approximately 600 letters from inmates, many asking for names of outside A.A. members with whom to correspond, or for help in making contact with A.A.s upon release.

Like Todd, many of the inmates who write in are looking to turn their lives around; they crave outside support in this effort from experienced A.A.s. And, as the flyer "Corrections Correspondence—a Special Kind of A.A. Service" reports, "Those who have participated in this service have found sharing with inmates a very gratifying form of Twelfth Step work."

Says Todd: "You sober alcoholics out there can help some of us in prison who need someone to correspond with. You can help someone inside, like Tom has helped me, by being part of the C.C.S. program. I hope you A.A.s on the outside will see this letter. Please write."

## BOX 459

### Order Form

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## Treatment Facilities

### A Picture and a Thousand Words

The Conference Treatment Facilities Committee, at the 48th General Service Conference in 1998, requested that the trustees' Treatment Facilities Committee examine the possibility of producing a table-top display for use by T.F. committees in their presentations to treatment facilities or for use at area or district events.

The trustees' committee concluded that the idea of having a table-top display was a good one, but that the creation and production would be best accomplished at the local level. This to the view that the local reality of the work being done and the needs and resources would be more accurately portrayed.



This conclusion was communicated to the area committees and as the photograph displays, the creative juices have been flowing around the Fellowship. The Area 44-Northern New Jersey Committee has developed this display to aid its T.F. Committee in carrying the message into the treatment domain. T.F. Committee chair Ron A. explains that a committee member with a graphics background conceived and produced the imagery which so vividly portrays the simple—one alcoholic talking to another—activity that is key to the A.A. program and Fellowship. Ron says that the display is used at presentations, area assemblies and conventions. On a rotating basis, the display shares a prominent place in the area office with those of the other area service committees.

We hope that this will inspire other creative folks in the A.A. community to start their own artistic endeavors to spread the message.

## P.I.

### Almost Everything You Need to Know About Airing P.S.A.s

The A.A. public service announcements have been produced by the General Service Office. They are wonderfully effective, in place and ready to go. But then what? How does a Public Information committee go about contacting radio and television stations and getting the P.S.A.s aired? The Maine Area P.I. Committee has been there, done that, and, says chairman Chris F., "we're glad to share what has proved a very rewarding experience."

To begin with, Chris says, "we wrote a letter to the Maine Association of Broadcasters, explained the nature of our work and asked for a copy of the state directory of TV and radio stations, if there was one. There was, and we received it in timely fashion. Eleven TV stations were listed, so we started with them. (There are more than 100 radio stations; we're contacting them now.)"

"We phoned each TV station and asked to speak to the person who handled P.S.A.s (some names were listed in the directory). We stated who we were and asked how best to provide them with a copy of A.A.'s P.S.A.s. We learned which format would best suit the station's needs, Betacam or 3/4" U-Matic, and what the scheduling procedure was. Most stations provide a certain number of minutes per week for all P.S.A.s; how much time each one gets depends upon the total number of P.S.A.s received. Airing times seem random, but we could request certain slots—such as 2 a.m., when the bars close."

Those who may be diffident about contacting stations will be pleased to hear the Maine Area P.I. Committee's discovery that "most stations are happy to hear from A.A. and pleased to air our P.S.A.s." Also, Chris points out, "keeping their F.C.C. license hinges partly on their providing a certain number of hours of public service time." Remember, he cautions, "that to receive the old P.S.A. back, you must include with the new one a note of request, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. He further notes that "most stations willingly dub the local hotline and central service office or intergroup phone numbers on the P.S.A. trailer. However, it's a good idea to state your needs clearly in a cover letter—and be sure to check that the number you give them is accurate, and that people at the other end of the line are ready to receive Twelfth Step calls. Do give the hotline volunteers ample advance notice."

Some stations, Chris explains, "will take the P.S.A. we provide, whether Betacam or U-Matic, and transfer it to



digital technology for their airing ease. They can dub on the hotline number at this time. Once they have transferred to digital, they no longer need the tape—which means you're then free to offer it to another station. In our case, we've tried to provide different P.S.A.s to stations in the same listening area." Chris emphasizes that "keeping track of which stations have what P.S.A.s is important in order to ensure that rotating the P.S.A.s on a quarterly basis goes smoothly. We suggest that, at committee rotation time, you pass on the P.S.A. schedule, intact, to the incoming P.I. chair, along with an explanation of how the system works—who has which P.S.A.s now and what they should be receiving the following month."

Returning to the subject of state TV and radio station directories, Chris says that "most professional organizations maintain them, and they can be an invaluable tool in establishing A.A. contacts, especially the first time around." He adds that "district P.I. committees are often in the best position to maintain a system once it has been set up; but as we all know, even the most active committees fade away at times, so area backup is a good idea. It also provides the stations with a stable A.A. address to contact in the future."

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## C.P.C.

### 'Everyone Working Together' Spells Unity

For the 26 A.A.s from northern Virginia who tended a booth at the Global Health Conference in Arlington last June, excitement ran high. Says Gayla S., a member of the Virginia Area Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community: "In keeping with our First Tradition, A.A. unity was exemplified through everyone working together in harmony."

Approximately 100 conference participants from around the world visited the A.A. exhibit, Gayla reports. "Some of them were Americans working in developing nations, the majority were from other lands. Many were surprised to learn that A.A. was thriving in their own or nearby countries. There were numerous requests for information about A.A. overseas and for the A.A. catalog listing literature available in languages besides English. Forty people filled out forms requesting copies of our newsletter for professionals, *About A.A.*"

Looking back, Gayla observes, "we C.P.C. volunteers feel we were able to provide clear information about how A.A. can and will cooperate with health care professionals worldwide in order to help suffering alco-

holics. And 'getting more than we gave' was a rewarding experience. One A.A. said that she had 'learned so much from seeing how more seasoned members had explained the program to visitors at the booth.'"

Some other comments from A.A.s that were noted by Gayla: "What a great opportunity! Thank you for allowing me to be of service." "We had fun; it was very worthwhile, and I love being a part of A.A." "There is joy in service. Thanks for the opportunity."

As so often happens in the Fellowship, one open door leads to another. In this instance, the event was followed up by a request from the American International Health Alliance for an A.A. orientation session. "So, on July 31st," relates Gayla, another A.A., Rebecca C., and I gave a presentation, with the help of two translators, to 12 psychiatrists from Ukraine, Moldavia, Kyrgyzstan and other countries of Eastern Europe. We met in a small, non-air conditioned conference room in Washington, D.C., and explained what A.A. is and isn't. We talked about the importance of anonymity, the autonomy of groups and how A.A. works as a spiritual program. We further provided copies of our list of General Service Offices, Central Offices, Intergroups and Answering Services Overseas and other A.A. literature, including information on how we 'cooperate but do not affiliate' with health care professionals and treatment centers.

"We told the visitors what literature is available in Russian and Ukrainian, and how to contact A.A. in their own or neighboring countries. Among other things, the Russians asked about our finances—we told them that in the spirit of our Seventh Tradition, 'A.A. is self-supporting through our own contributions'—and wanted to know 'how easy or difficult' it is to stay sober. That got us into the importance of meetings, sponsorship, the Twelve Steps and far more."

That same Saturday morning, Gayla relates, "Rebecca and I accompanied our new Eastern European friends to an open A.A. meeting at the West Side Club in Georgetown. The translators took turns doing on-the-spot translations, speaking through their cell phones into earpieces worn by the visitors. Other than an objection by one A.A. member to the presence of the psychiatrists, the guests were warmly welcomed. They seemed to benefit from direct contact with recovering alcoholics at an A.A. meeting."

In conclusion Gayla says, "we think our local C.P.C. committee was successful in getting information about A.A. to health care professionals working worldwide. We know it was a rewarding and joyous experience for us as volunteers." Adds Ted K., Arlington district committee member: "It was neat to see how G.S.O., the Virginia Area, the Arlington District and Northern Virginia Intergroup all worked together to reach professionals both here and overseas with the A.A. message."

# 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.



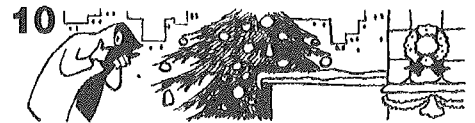
**7** Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



**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.

Items and Ideas on Area Gatherings for A.A.s—Via G.S.O.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 1999

## 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.

### October

- 1-3—*Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.* Autumn Leaf Roundup. Write: Ch., Effort Square Postal Outlet, Hamilton, ON L8N 4G3
- 1-3—*Toronto, Ontario, Canada.* Gratitude Roundup (presented by gay & lesbian members). Write: Box 31, 552 Church St., Toronto, ON M4Y 2E3
- 1-3—*Page, Arizona.* Serenity on the Lake. Write: Ch., Box 2781, Page, AZ 86040
- 1-3—*Crescent City, California.* 13th Annual Sobriety By the Sea Rally. Write: Ch., Box 871, Crescent City, CA 95531
- 1-3—*Paducah, Kentucky.* Energy Lake Campout. Write: Ch., Box 2300, Paducah, KY 42002
- 1-3—*Troy, Michigan.* 12th Tri-County Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1712, Garden City, MI 48136
- 1-3—*Stateline, Nevada.* Lake Tahoe Fall Festival. Write: Ch., Box 19307, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151-0307
- 1-3—*Tahlequah, Oklahoma.* Serenity Harvest Conf. Write: Ch., Box 12601, Oklahoma City, OK 73157
- 1-4—*South Morang Melways, Australia.* Second Indigenous Aboriginal Conv. Write: Ch., Unit #3/49, Coonans Rd., Victoria, Paswee Vale So., Australia 3044
- 2-3—*Karelia, Russia.* Fifth Anniversary of Oct. 94 Group. Write: Ch., October 94, 185014, Petrozavodsk. Box 113, Karelia, Russia.
- 7-10—*Norman Park, California.* Woman to Woman. Write: Ch., Box 30344, Sea Island, GA 31561
- 7-10—*Cartersville, Tennessee.* Seventh International Conference for Old Timers. Write: Ch., Box 427, Blue Springs, MO 64013-0427
- 8-9—*Window Rock, Arizona.* Special Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 8-10—*Prince George, British Columbia, Canada.* Northern Lights Roundup. Write: Ch., 1883 Gorse St., Prince George, BC V2L 1G7
- 8-10—*Orilla, Ontario, Canada.* 34th Georgian Bay Dist. Conv. Write: Ch., Geneva Park Com., Box 23, RR #1, Midland, ON L4R 4K3
- 8-10—*Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.* 48th Regional Conf. Write: Ch. Ottawa Area Intergroup, 211 Bronson Ave., Ste. 108, Ottawa, ON K1R 6H5
- 8-10—*Sudbury, Ontario, Canada.* Northeastern Ontario Conf. Write: Ch., Box 27, Val Caron, ON P3N 1N6
- 8-10—*Balibago, Angeles City, Philippines.* Fourth Fall International Roundup. Write: Ch., 1012 Marcellus St., Balibago, Angeles City, Philippines 2009

- 8-10—*Morrilton (Petit Jean Mountain), Arkansas.* ARKYPAA XVII. Write: Secy., 121 Donna Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205
- 8-10—*Old Town Pasadena, California.* 48th Southern Calif. Conv. Write: Ch., 19744 Beach Blvd., Box 415, Huntington Beach, CA 92648
- 8-10—*Pueblo, Colorado.* Ocoberfest. Write: Ch., 4035-A Club Manor Drive, Pueblo, CO. 81008
- 8-10—*Dubuque, Iowa.* Area 24 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., 12916 Rt. 52N, Dubuque, IA 52002
- 8-10—*Lafayette, Louisiana.* Cajun Country Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3160, Lafayette, LA 70502
- 8-10—*North Kansas City, Missouri.* 50th Anniv. Celebration. Write: Ch., 1804½ Swift, North Kansas City, MO 64116
- 8-10—*Las Vegas, Nevada.* Soberfest (presented by gay & lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 95601, Las Vegas, NV 89193-5601
- 8-10—*Jamestown, New York.* Sailing with Sobriety. Write: Ch., Box 3214, Jamestown, NY 14701
- 8-10—*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.* Fourth Native American Conf. Write: Ch., Red Road to Freedom, Box 76171, Oklahoma City, OK 73147-2171
- 9-10—*Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada.* 27th Fort Frances Roundup. Write: Ch., 1232 Emo Rd., Fort Frances, ON P9A 2V5
- 9-10—*Roberts Creek, British Columbia, Canada.* Ocoberfest. Write: Ch., RR #2, Lookout Site C-89, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0
- 14-17—*Savannah, Georgia.* 46th Georgia State Pre-Paid Conv. Write: Ch., Box 14256, Savannah, GA 31416
- 15-17—*Claresholm, Alberta, Canada.* 26th Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 45, Claresholm, AB T0L 0T0
- 15-17—*Campbell River, British Columbia, Canada.* 25th Annual Rally. Write: Ch., Box 652, Campbell River, BC V9W 6J3
- 15-17—*Merritt, British Columbia, Canada.* 27th Annual Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 1779, Merritt, BC V1K 1B8
- 15-17—*Fairbanks, Alaska.* Alaska Area Election Assembly. Write: Ch., 2644 Diamond St., North Pole, AK 99705-6549

## Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

October (page 18): According to whom?

November (page 36): Big Book authors

- 15-17—*Cromwell, Connecticut.* 29th North East Regional Conv. Write: Ch., 61 Laurel Lane, Ridgefield, CT 06877
- 15-17—*Maui, Hawaii.* Eighth MICYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 1862, Wailuku, HI 96793
- 15-17—*Cedar Falls, Iowa.* Serenity Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 605, Cedar Falls, IA 50613
- 15-17—*Austin, Minnesota.* Hiawathaland Get-Together. Write: Ch., Box 5792, Rochester, MN 55903
- 15-17—*Dayton, Ohio.* 43rd State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3595, Cincinnati, OH 45201
- 21-24—*Raleigh, North Carolina.* NCCY-PAA. Write: Ch., Box 1721, Cary, NC 27512
- 22-24—*Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.* Area Assembly and Roundup. Write: Ch., 348 Cameron St., Moncton, NB E1C 5Z4
- 22-24—*Nassau, Bahamas.* Sobriety in Paradise. Write: Ch., Box EE 16414, Nassau Group, Nassau, Bahamas
- 22-24—*San Bernardino, California.* 12th Annual Inland Empire Conv. Write: Trsr., Box 962, Moreno Valley, CA 92556
- 22-24—*St. Petersburg Beach, Florida.* Suncoast Conv. Write: Ch., Box 14182, St. Petersburg, FL 33733
- 22-24—*South Portland, Maine.* Woman to Woman Conf. Write: Ch., Box 378, Raymond, ME 04071
- 22-24—*Mackinac Island, Michigan.* 11th Annual Fall Weekend. Write: Ch., c/o Lansing Central Office, 302 S. Waverly, Lansing, MI 48911

## Planning a Future Event?

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

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

Date of event: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_

Name of event: \_\_\_\_\_

Place (city, state or prov.): \_\_\_\_\_

For information, write: (exact mailing address) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone # (for office use only): \_\_\_\_\_

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

- 22-24—*St. Cloud, Minnesota*. St. Cloud Roundup. Write: Ch., 107 N 2nd St., Cold Spring, MN 56320
- 22-24—*Greensburg, Pennsylvania*. 52nd Laurel Highlands Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6, Bovard, PA 15619
- 22-24—*Fontana, Wisconsin*. 48th Annual Southern Wisconsin Fall Conf. Write: Trsr., Box 116, Mukwonago, WI 53149
- 23-24—*Kowloon, Hong Kong*. 30 Years in Hong Kong Conv. Write: Ch., 12 Borrett Road, Hong Kong
- 28-31—*Hagerstown, Maryland*. 15th Area 29 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1388, Ellicott City, MD 21041
- 29-30—*Cornwall, Ontario, Canada*. 52nd Anniv. in Cornwall. Write: Ch., Box 1984, Cornwall, ON K6H 6N7
- 29-31—*London, Ontario, Canada*. 46th Annual Western Ontario Conf. Write: Ch., 956 Dundas St., Box 46036, London, ON N5W 3A1
- 29-31—*St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands*. 13th Annual Caribbean Conv. Write: Ch., Box 303435, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00803-3435
- 29-31—*Paducah, Kentucky*. 39th Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3265, Paducah, KY 42002
- 29-31—*Bossier City, Louisiana*. Tri State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 495, Shreveport, LA 71162-0495
- 29-31—*Branson, Missouri*. 18th Annual Convention. Write: Trsr., Box 3263, Springfield, MO 65808-3263
- 29-31—*Schenectady, New York*. 49th HMB Area Conv. Write: Ch., Box 147, Schenectady, NY 12308
- 29-31—*Lake Livingston, Texas*. Spirit of the Pines. Write: Ch., 901 Magnolia, Lake Jackson, TX 77566
- 29-31—*Roanoke, Virginia*. Virginia Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 706 Maupin Pl., Williamsburg, VA 23185

## November

- 4-6—*Ocracoke, North Carolina*. 27th Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 506, Ocracoke, NC 27960
- 5-7—*Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada*. Wetaskiwin Round-Up. Write: Ch., 4610-55 Ave., Wetaskiwin, AB T9A 1A2
- 5-7—*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada*. 55th Annual Manitoba Keystone Conf. Write: Ch., 100-595 River Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3L 0E6
- 5-7—*Monaco*. Let Go In Monaco. Write: Ch., Anglophone Monaco Conv., Intergroup, Box 1012, Nice 06001, France
- 5-7—*Jekyll Island, Georgia*. Second Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 214911, South Daytona, FL 32121
- 5-7—*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*. Freedom Roundup (presented by gay & lesbian members). Write: Ch., 1324 Locust St., #310, Philadelphia, PA 19107
- 5-7—*Casper, Wyoming*. Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1387, Casper, WY 82602-1387
- 5-7—*Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica*. Fifth International Pacific Group Conv. Write: Ch., Apartado 297, Quepos, Costa Rica
- 11-14—*Ft. Walton Beach, Florida*. 30th Gulf Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., 5964 West Shore Dr., Pensacola, FL 32526
- 12-14—*Buedingen, Germany*. Fifth Hessen Intergroup Roundup. Write: Ch., Dudenhofer Strasse 69, 63110 Germany
- 12-14—*Goodyear, Arizona*. Dry Camp XII. Write: Ch., 9520 W. El Caminito Dr., Peoria, AZ 85345
- 12-14—*Okoboji, Iowa*. North West Iowa Pre-Winter Rally. Write: Ch., Box 992, Okoboji, IA 51355
- 12-14—*Fitchburg, Massachusetts*. 36th Annual State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 344, Westminster, MA 01473-0344
- 12-14—*Cincinnati, Ohio*. Buckeye Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 5314, Cincinnati, OH 45205
- 12-14—*Toccoa, Georgia*. North Georgia Open Recovery Weekend. Write: Ch., 1940 Winners Circle, Lawrenceville, GA 30043
- 19-21—*Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada*. Moose Jaw & District Family Roundup. Write: Ch., 1001 Lilloet St. W., Moose Jaw, SK S6H 4Z9

- 19-21—*St. Petersburg, Florida*. The Big Book Comes Alive. Write: Ch., Box 86703, St. Petersburg, FL 33738
- 19-21—*Fontana, Wisconsin*. 10th Annual McHenry's Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 717, McHenry, IL 60051-0717
- 26-28—*Hartford, Connecticut*. CSYPCAA XIV. Write: Ch., Box 51, Ellington, CT 06029
- 26-28—*Diamondhead, Mississippi*. 10th Gratitude Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 7851, Gulfport, MS 39507-7851
- 26-28—*Omaha, Nebraska*. Great Plains Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 34222, Omaha, NE 68134
- 26-28—*Tulsa, Oklahoma*. Seventh Annual Green Country Thanksgiving Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 54338, Tulsa, OK 74155-0338
- 26-28—*Everett, Washington*. 21st Everett Conf. Write: Ch., 6625 Highland Dr. #4, Everett, WA 98203

## December

- 3-5—*Palma de Mallorca, Spain*. Area 14 Unity Days. Write: Ch., C/Garonda 68, 07639 Cala Pi por Campos Mallorca, Spain
- 3-5—*Lubbock, Texas*. Southwest Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 10-12—*Panama City Beach, Florida*. Third Celebration by the Sea. Write: Ch., Box 761, Panama City, FL 32402

## January

- 14-16—*North Island, New Zealand*. New Zealand Conv. 2000. Write: Ch., Box 49, Whakatu, Hawkes Bay, NZ
- 27-30—*Fort Walton Beach, Florida*. Tenth Annual Emerald Coast Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 875, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-0875
- 28-30—*Baton Rouge, Louisiana*. Fourth Annual Red Stick Roundup. Write: Ch., 8312 Florida Blvd., Ste. 213-A, Baton Rouge, LA 70806