

# about A.A.

## a newsletter for professional men and women



From: The Committee on Cooperation  
with the Professional Community, of the  
General Service Board of Alcoholics  
Anonymous, Box 459, Grand Central Station,  
New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.

December, 1974

### 1974 Survey of A.A.'s in U.S. and Canada Shows More Women Members, Firm Sobriety Maintenance

San Francisco, Calif., Dec. 18—Women account for nearly one in three (31%) of *new* members of Alcoholics Anonymous in the last three years, and account for 28% of A.A.'s *total* membership.

This fact was revealed today in the results of the largest survey of recovered alcoholics ever made, covering 13,467 A.A. members in the United States and Canada. The results were reported here to the North American Congress on Alcohol and Drug Problems by Dr. John L. Norris, chairman of the board of trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous. The 1974 survey is the latest of three made at three-year intervals.

Dr. Norris also presented statistics on maintenance of sobriety. One in four members of A.A. at a typical meeting has not had a drink for five years or more; 91% of these, each succeeding year, will enjoy continuing sobriety and will continue to attend A.A. meetings regularly. Of those sober in A.A. between one and five years, about 79%, each succeeding year, will not drink and will remain active in the Fellowship.

#### *Appreciation of Professional Help Revealed*

Counseling agencies are mentioned more often as a primary factor in coming to A.A. by those entering in the last three years. There is a corresponding decline in the citing of "another A.A. member" as a prime factor, although this remains the single factor most often named, Dr. Norris added. The next most mentioned factors, in order, are family, doctor, and media.

About 30% of those surveyed indicate that some form of counseling—i.e., medical, psychiatric, spiritual—for their alcoholism was important in directing them to A.A. or has played an important part in their recovery.

#### *Age, Occupation, and Life-Style Noted*

Over the last six years, the percentage of young people in A.A. shows no increase, Dr. Norris said. The 1974 survey puts 7% in the under-30 bracket; 55%, 30 to 49; 37%, 50 or older.

Breaking down the membership of A.A. by occupation, the survey places 38% in the executive/professional/technical category. Blue-collar and office clerical account for 32%. About 11% say they are housewives—including two males! Among the unusual occupations named are horse-show ringmaster and deep-sea diver.

About 92% of those surveyed cite an improvement in the quality of their lives since joining A.A.

The 89% of the respondents who have chosen to reveal their own A.A. membership (but not that of *other* alcoholics in A.A.) to relatives, friends, co-workers, clergymen, and doctors are not in violation of the A.A. Fellowship's tradition of anonymity, Dr. Norris pointed out, because it calls for maintenance of anonymity only in the press, TV, and other public communications media.

#### *Survey Method Explained*

The method of the 1974 survey was quite similar to those used by the A.A. General Service Board in its 1968 and 1971 studies. Ninety-one elected delegates to the U.S. and Canada A.A. General Service Conference, an annual representative assembly of the movement, were sent enough questionnaires to cover the membership of 3% of the A.A. groups (excluding those in institutions) in each state and province.

Choosing the required number of sample groups, each delegate made an appearance at a regular meeting of the group and asked each member present to complete one of the 12-item questionnaires.

Questions had been prepared by the board's Public Information Committee and its Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community, with technical assistance from scientists not in A.A., as well as from research experts who are A.A. members.

Responses were received from 87 (96%) of the 91 A.A. Conference electoral areas.

Findings of the previous surveys have been published widely in journals and books. The 1974 data will be summarized in a new A.A. pamphlet to be available from the General Service Office (G.S.O.) of A.A. in New York, and in a Professional Exhibit to be displayed, upon invitation, at national conferences and conventions of professional people.

Dr. Norris noted that, in general, the results of the 1974 survey of A.A. membership show remarkable stability when compared with those of previous surveys, in spite of the facts that A.A. has averaged more than 10% annual growth for several years, and that the selection of participants was done independently for each survey. Almost half the alcoholics responding to the 1974 questionnaire had not come to A.A. by 1968, which makes the stability of the results even more significant.

#### *General Information on A.A.*

Started by an alcoholic stockbroker and an alcoholic surgeon in Akron, Ohio, in 1935, Alcoholics Anonymous is entirely a lay, voluntary movement run by alcoholics themselves, with each member attempting to help any other problem drinkers interested. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, and the Fellowship accepts contributions only from its own members.

A.A. is not affiliated with any governmental or religious or any other organization or institution, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. It concentrates only on one primary purpose—to help alcoholics recover.

Today, A.A. operates chiefly through more than 22,000 local A.A. groups meeting in 92 countries. There are nearly 13,000 groups in the United States and more than 2,100 in Canada. More than 1,000 groups meet in correctional facilities and another 1,000 in hospitals or alcoholic rehabilitation centers. A.A.'s estimated total worldwide membership is now 800,000.

#### Facts About A.A. in Correctional Facilities Shown by New Study

About 1,000 U.S. and Canadian corrections institutions which have functioning A.A. groups received this year a questionnaire from our G.S. Board's Institutions Committee, which is chaired by nonalcoholic trustee Austin MacCormick, well-known criminologist.

Findings are reported in some detail in the new edition of our pamphlet "A.A. in Prisons." Of the respondents, 75% were state institutions for men, but Federal and some women's and youth facilities also replied.

An inmate's chances of "making it on the outside" are definitely improved by participation in A.A., 96% of the responding administrators declared, and 90% regard A.A. as "contributing to the objectives of the institution."

Respondents stated that 50% of all inmates are sentenced for alcohol-related crimes. Some put the percentage higher, and others noted this was true of an even larger proportion of young offenders. Yet it was found that only 10% of such inmates attend A.A. meetings. Attendance is voluntary in 90% of the institutions surveyed.

Corrections personnel are invited to write for a free copy of the pamphlet, which also details how A.A. groups have been operating successfully within corrections institutions for almost 35 years.

#### 'Two-Hat' Workshops Prove Popular Problem-Solving Sessions

A.A. members employed in the field of alcoholism are known as A.A.'s who "wear two hats."

This double identity, as both (a) a recovered alcoholic, who is never paid for A.A. activity *per se*, and (b) a professional or hired worker in alcoholism, has not always been clearly seen or understood.

(It is the subject of extensive discussion in "A.A. Guidelines for Members Who 'Wear Two Hats.'" A newly revised edition has just been issued by G.S.O., which urges all A.A. members in the field to read it.)

The last decade has seen many more A.A. members employed in alcoholism. The increasingly popular two-hat workshop is a kind of meeting which is leading to better understanding of the dual role problem—both by two-hatters and by other A.A.'s.

Five years ago, two-hatters in one state decided to try a weekend together, simply as A.A.'s. No shop-talk, just A.A. talk. The statewide gathering was so rewarding, it is now held twice a year, bigger every time. In another state, a two-hatters' meeting was programmed as part of a state A.A. convention. At one large local A.A. central office, two-hatters in the community get together every two months.

Additionally, the dual role of the two-hatter has been scheduled for general discussion by all A.A.'s at an increasing number of regional A.A. conventions. This enlarges the general membership's understanding of the somewhat different problems encountered by A.A.'s who "wear two hats."

This is a development we shall watch with keen interest, and we'll welcome correspondence sharing experience on the subject.

### England Hosts A.A. World Service Meeting

Thirty-three representatives of A.A. in 22 nations attended the third A.A. World Service Meeting in London in October. It was the first not held in New York.

The idea of our late co-founder Bill W., the first meeting was held in 1969. Now held every two years, the meeting provides an opportunity for A.A. service workers to share worldwide experience about A.A. publishing, finance, service offices, public relations, the A.A. Traditions, and other concerns of mutual interest.

Reports made by participants indicate continued A.A. growth worldwide, as well as the determination of A.A. in all areas to remain financially self-supporting, and unaffiliated but cooperative with professional and other efforts to help alcoholics.

Nations represented include Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Procedurally, U.S./Canada forms one jointly represented unit with no more rights of participation in the deliberations than any other unit. Representatives voted to hold the fourth World Service Meeting in New York in 1976, with this theme: "Working With Others." A.A. in each participating nation will try to assume increasing responsibility for underwriting its share of the meeting costs.

### A.A. Board Chairman Circling Globe

John L. Norris, M.D., nonalcoholic chairman of the General Service Board of A.A., embarked in October on a two-stage journey in which he will circle the earth on A.A. business.

Accompanied by Mrs. Norris, "Dr. Jack" attended A.A.'s third World Service Meeting in London in October (story at left) and the annual English A.A. Convention in Chichester before visiting A.A. offices in Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, and Dublin.

After the North American Congress on Alcohol and Drug Problems in San Francisco, Dr. and Mrs. Norris will visit Honolulu and Tokyo en route to the 31st International Congress on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence in Bangkok, Thailand, in February. Afterward, they will visit medical, governmental, and industrial officials interested in alcoholism, as well as A.A. members, in India, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, France, Belgium, and again England.

### Everybody Invited to A.A.'s 40th-Birthday Party

More than 10,000 A.A. members, their families, and friends from five continents will gather in Denver, Colorado, U.S.A., July 4-6, 1975, for the Fellowship's 40th Anniversary International Convention.

Anyone interested is invited to what may well be the largest assemblage of sober alcoholics the world has seen yet. \$15 covers registration for all Convention events. Room reservations must be made through A.A.'s General Service Office (Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017). Housing will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Spanish, French, and North American Indian A.A. sessions will be among the scores of A.A. meetings scheduled almost around the clock in the Currihan Convention Center.

Get-acquainted dances Thursday, July 3, open the celebration. A joint A.A., Al-Anon, and Alateen meeting Friday night and a big-name variety show Saturday night are included. A spiritual convocation closes the Convention Sunday morning.

Talks by nonalcoholic professionals in the field of alcoholism have also been scheduled.

A.A. has held such a king-size gathering every five years, beginning with the historic one in Cleveland,

Ohio, in 1950, at which co-founder Dr. Bob S. made his last public talk and the Fellowship's Twelve Traditions were "officially" adopted by the membership.

At the 1955 St. Louis Convention, the General Service Conference (an annual representative assembly) was formally accepted by the membership as the successor to the movement's pioneer leadership. No formal A.A. business or organizational functions have occurred at subsequent Conventions, because the yearly Conference has handled any such necessary transactions for the Fellowship as a whole.

Mostly, our Conventions are just giant A.A. meetings – the usual A.A. meeting experience many times magnified. Do join us, if you wish. We promise you an unforgettable weekend.

### New A.A. Publications May Interest Professionals in Alcoholism Work

Six new publications issued by the A.A. General Service Office could prove useful to professionals in the field of alcoholism. They are:

*"How A.A. Members Cooperate With Other Community Efforts to Help Alcoholics."* Completely new, this 24-page pamphlet replaces "Cooperation but Not Affiliation."

*"Problems Other Than Alcohol,"* a new presentation of our co-founder Bill W.'s answer to the question "What about narcotics addicts and A.A.?"

*"The A.A. Member and Drug Abuse,"* revised edition of "Sedatives, Stimulants, and the Alcoholic," a report from a group of doctors in A.A. Use of pot, hallucinogens, tranquilizers, sedatives, amphetamines, and opiates can offer special danger to an alcoholic's sobriety, A.A. experience shows.

*"Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings,"* newly revised, 16 pages. This is especially helpful to the increasing number of A.A. members asked to explain the Fellowship to non-A.A. groups.

*"A.A. and the Armed Services,"* a new 32-page pamphlet. With ten personal case histories, it illustrates how a man or woman (any rank, any age) can successfully recover from alcoholism.

*"A.A. Guidelines on Cooperating With Court, A.S.A.P., and Similar Programs"* tells of the latest experiences of A.A. members in this activity.

A free sample of any of these publications can be picked up at an A.A. meeting or office, or ordered from Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017.

### Renewed A.A. Cooperation With Professionals Favored by Our 1974 General Service Conference

The 1974 General Service Conference (U.S./Canada) unanimously adopted a recommendation that local A.A. committees on "cooperation with the professional community" try to improve mutual understanding and cooperation between A.A. and other community efforts to help alcoholics.

The Conference, representing the "group conscience" of A.A. as a whole, dealt extensively with A.A. members' relationships to professionals in the alcoholism field in workshops, presentations, and discussions.

Ninety-one U.S. and Canadian delegates, plus members of the General Service Board, the General Service Office (G.S.O.) and Grapevine staffs, and corporate directors of A.A. World Services, Inc., and the Grapevine were in attendance. With a total of 132 members, the 24th annual Conference was our largest yet.

"Understanding and Cooperation – Inside and Outside A.A." was the theme of the six-day gathering, which reviewed many matters of worldwide A.A. concern. For example, the effect of employment of A.A. members by professional alcoholism agencies was explored at length.

Although the Conference (like the board and G.S.O.) has no formal authority over A.A. members and groups, its advisory actions are respected by A.A.'s everywhere.

**News Briefs:** The 1974 Rutgers Summer School of Alcohol Studies offered a new course, "Understanding and Working with Alcoholics Anonymous." . . . Recent visitors to G.S.O. included Willard Foster, special assistant to the deputy director of N.I.A.A.A. Guest of the A.A. board's Policy Committee, he reviewed the aims of Federal legal and educational alcoholism programs. . . . At a college in Oregon, textbook for one course is "Alcoholics Anonymous." Does anyone know of other academic institutions which regularly assign readings in A.A. material? Is any use made of it in medical schools? Seminars? We'd like to know about it.