

■ A.A.'s Twelve Concepts for World Service

Looking back from the vantage point of over 75 years, it can be difficult to imagine how uncertain A.A.'s existence was in its early days. Difficult problems related to money, property and prestige plagued the early members and the question of how this group of alcoholics could best get along and carry their message to others was paramount in their minds. With the many challenges faced by the Fellowship in its infancy, cofounder Bill W. often referred to A.A. as "a flickering candle," one that might at any minute "be snuffed out." Yet, the Fellowship proved durable and, with the help of its many friends and supporters, began to take root and grow.

It began with the groups — first only a few, then hundreds, then thousands. Soon an Alcoholic Foundation, later renamed the General Service Board, was formed to be responsible for A.A.'s affairs. And with Dr. Bob's death and Bill facing up to his own mortality, a General Service Conference ultimately took shape and assumed the leadership that had once fallen to A.A.'s cofounders and early members. Meanwhile, a tiny publishing operation and service office had grown in size and importance to the Fellowship, and a monthly journal, the A.A. Grapevine, was being published.

Questions abounded. Which of these entities was supposed to do what? What was their relationship? Who was in charge? What were their responsibilities — and what were their rights?

As Bill acknowledged in 1960 to the General Service Conference, "Just as it was vital to codify in Twelve Steps the spiritual side of our program, to codify in Twelve Traditional principles the forces and ideas that would make for unity and discourage disunity, so may it now be necessary to codify those principles and relationships upon which our world service function rests, from the group right up through the trustees of the General Service Board...a stated set of principles and relationships by which we may understand each other, the tasks

to be done and the principles for doing them."

So, Bill set about putting the Twelve Concepts for World Service onto paper, noting in the introduction to the Concepts, first published in 1962 and later in combination with *The A.A. Service Manual*, that the Concepts "aim to record the 'why' of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost."

Further, he wrote, "It is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of 'checks and balances.' We have had to face the fact that we usually try to enlarge our own authority and prestige when we are in the saddle. But when we are not, we strenuously resist a heavy-handed management wherein someone else holds the reins. I'm the more sure of this because I possess these traits myself.

"Consequently, ideas like the following pervade the Concepts: 'No group or individual should be set in *unqualified* authority over another,' 'Large, active and *dissimilar* operations should be separately incorporated and managed, each with its own staff, equipment and working capital,' 'We ought to avoid undue concentration of money or personal influence in any service group or entity,' 'At each level of service, authority should be equal to responsibility,' 'Double-headed executive direction should be avoided.' These and other similar provisions define working relations that can be friendly and yet efficient."

Adopted by the General Service Conference in 1962, the Concepts have been one of A.A.'s "behind the scenes" forces in guiding the Fellowship to its present level of growth in reaching alcoholics around the world. Given the scope of A.A. and its vital services, it's important to recognize how the world service structure functions and how it developed, and that the principles contained in the Twelve Concepts, such as the "Right of Decision," the "Right of Participation" and the "Right of Appeal," were hammered out on the anvil of A.A.



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experience, just like the Steps and Traditions.

As noted by Margaret C., a former general service trustee, “You and I should know: who has the final authority for world service; how our trustees relate to our business corporations; how we handle the situations fairly if someone disagrees with the majority; how our Conference relates to the board of trustees; why it is so necessary for us to have good rotating leadership; why Conference action should never be personally punitive nor incite public controversy....

“The Concepts help to insure A.A. unity and do a very beautiful thing for us: They free you and me so we may devote our attention to carrying out our Fellowship’s primary purpose. So, in a sense, the Concepts, too, help to bring recovery to the alcoholic out there, anywhere in the world, who might need our help.”

Writing of the Concepts, a former delegate from the South Florida area, Sam S., noted the permanent importance of the Concepts to A.A.’s general welfare and how inherent the principles behind the Concepts are to A.A. members, whether they are specifically aware of the Concepts or not. “They tell us that we should never become money- or power-conscious, that we are all equals, that decisions should be made, if possible, only when we are substantially agreed, that our actions should never be judgmental, and that we should act, at all times, as trusted servants only. These...are guides for the relationship of the Conference to all of A.A.; but they are guides, too, by which any group of A.A.s, anywhere, can work effectively together to keep our Fellowship safe for those yet to come.

“Not only are the lines of communication clearly drawn in our Twelve Concepts, but we are given methods for communicating that are full of A.A. concern, trust, love, mutual respect, and recognition of the dignity of each individual. Indeed, we find that our Twelve Concepts are the spiritual foundation for all of A.A.’s world services.”

For more information about the Twelve Concepts for World Service, see “The Twelve Concepts Illustrated” (P-8); Twelve Concepts Window Shade (M-20); “The Twelve Concepts for World Service” (BM-31, BM-32).

■ **Reminder:** **Résumés for Trustees** **Election due Jan. 1, 2012**

Two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees—from the West Central and Western Canada regions—will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2012. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2012, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new West Central regional trustee will succeed Ken B., of Omaha, Nebraska; the new Western Canada regional will follow Vic P., of Calgary, Alberta.

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

■ **Central Office/ Intergroup Seminar**

Tucson will be the site of the 26th Annual Central Office/Intergroup Seminar, September 30–October 2, 2011. Hosted by the Tucson Area Intergroup, the event will be held at The Hotel Arizona. This year’s theme is “We Are Responsible For A.A.’s Future — Let It Begin With Us.”

This annual Seminar provides a forum, through workshops, discussions, and the exchange of ideas and shared experience, for those who are on A.A.’s front line. Attendees are Intergroup/Central Office managers, Intergroup representatives, and representatives from G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members, and from the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Boards.

Please make your reservations, at special seminar rates, by September 27, by calling 1-800-845-4596, or online at www.thehotelarizona.com

Registration fee is \$25.00. For any questions, or for a Seminar registration/questionnaire, contact Reggie T., coordinator, (520) 882-7422; aatucson.org.

A.A. eBooks

For information about A.A.W.S. eBooks and eReader App, visit www.aa.org in November 2011.

■ Celebrating A.A.'s 80th Anniversary Atlanta, Georgia — July 2-5, 2015



Box 4-5-9, Fall 2011

■ Name That Theme

For the 2015 International Convention— *Deadline 12/1/11*

Believe it or not, it's time to start thinking about a theme for the 2015 International Convention celebration of A.A.'s 80th Anniversary in Atlanta, Georgia, July 2-5, 2015. We invite you to send in suggestions for a theme, which will be selected by the trustees' International Conventions/Regional Forums Committee. Please let us hear from you by December 1, 2011.

To spark your thinking, the themes of past A.A. International Conventions have been: 1965 "I Am Responsible"; 1970 "Unity"; 1975 "Let It Begin With Me"; 1980 "The Joy of Living"; 1985 "Fifty Years With Gratitude"; 1990 "Fifty-Five Years—One Day At a Time"; 1995 "A.A. Everywhere—Anywhere"; 2000 "Pass It On—Into the 21st Century"; 2005 "I Am Responsible"; and in 2010 "A Vision for You."

Send your ideas to: International Conventions Assignment, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

■ Registration and Housing for 2015

Many A.A. members are beginning to write G.S.O. requesting information on registration and housing accommodations for A.A.'s 80th Birthday celebration. Please do not write or call G.S.O., as this information will not be available for some time.

Registration forms will be sent to all A.A. groups on our mailing list in September 2014. At the same time, local intergroup/central offices will also receive approximately 100 copies of these forms. Most of the hotels in and around Atlanta are already committed to our Convention and the rates for each — from very reasonable to luxurious — will be described in the housing information.

The procedures for registration and housing, beyond specifying this 2014 mailing date, are still in the planning stages. Notification of these procedures will appear in *Box 4-5-9* so that anyone who is interested will have timely and accurate information. As we do not maintain a separate mailing list of A.A. members who have requested information, please be sure your home group receives *Box 4-5-9* so that you and all members of your group will have access to this information as we get nearer to Convention time.

Also, keep an eye on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site, www.aa.org, for International Convention updates and information.

■ Four New Class B Trustees Join the General Service Board

The General Service Board of A.A. welcomes four new Class B (alcoholic) trustees: J. Gary L., Northeast regional; Clayton V., Southwest regional; Barbara K., trustee-at-large/Canada; and Nancy H., general service trustee. While no trustee can be said to “represent” a geographical section — all trustees represent the Fellowship as a whole — these newly-selected trusted servants will bring to the board’s deliberations a regional A.A. point of view and experience that will be invaluable.

J. Gary L., of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, sober since 1990, succeeds John K. as Northeast regional trustee. “One of the early lessons I learned in recovery — and one of the things that prompted me to get involved in service in the first place — was that I had to give something back,” he says. “Alcoholics Anonymous saved my life, and anything I can do to give back is but a small installment on a debt that I can never fully repay.” A 2005-06 (Panel 55) delegate, J. Gary was “very surprised” to be selected. “I knew all of the folks that had offered themselves for service in this capacity, and it was an extremely strong slate of candidates. So there was certainly a ‘Why me?’ moment,” he jokes.

In his life outside of A.A., J. Gary is an educator at a university in his home state of Pennsylvania, specializing in educational research methodology. He has also been involved tutoring students with disabilities at a local community college and participating in community support and restoration projects.

His professional background, when combined with his A.A. experience, has provided J. Gary with a good mix he believes will be helpful in his new work as regional trustee. “I’m a professional educator, and I’ve always said that fundamental to good service are the three E’s: education, example, and enthusiasm. I’ve moved through the leadership structure in my job — from teacher to department chair to Dean to Vice Provost. And I’ve tried never to lose sight of the importance of our students in the same way that I hope to never lose sight of the importance of our individual members.”

Clayton V., of Sikestown, Missouri, is also a past delegate, serving from 1999-2000 (Panel 49). Selected to replace outgoing Southwest regional trustee Conley B., Clayton sees his upcoming tenure on the board as a new adventure in service. “I don’t really have any preconceived ideas about how it’s going to be,” he says, “though I’m sure it’s going to involve a lot of travel.”

Sober since 1987, Clayton is a lawyer in private practice, specializing in corporate law. He also has considerable experience in the financial sector, serving as board chairman for a multi-state family bank started by his grandfather. “I spend a lot of time taking care of the bank, doing a fair amount of banking in addition to lawyering. So, in terms of the business and finance

aspects of serving on the board, I feel well prepared.”

Clayton feels well prepared on the service end, as well, noting that the Southwest regional delegates assembly has helped him put the pieces of A.A.’s service world together. “We run it every year in Oklahoma City, trying to get the new delegates ready. In the process, we interact with all the past trustees and delegates from this region and I think that has helped.”

Barbara K., (past delegate Panel 55) of Oakwood, Ontario, will replace Jo-Anne L. as the new trustee-at-large/Canada. For Barb, sober since 1988, service to the Fellowship represents “one of the greatest gifts any alcoholic can be given,” she says. “The gift of being able to help other alcoholics, to think about others and be responsible to keep my commitments is a miracle.” Barbara loves service work and feels that “as a member I could never give back enough for what I have been so freely given.”

Active in her home group as well as at the district and area level, Barb hopes “to assist other service entities to grow and to know that unity is always key to our Fellowship.”

Currently retired, Barb has been active in many local professional organizations and was mayor of a municipality in her region for three years, a position that has given her experience with presentations and with being a good listener, skills she knows she will need for her service on the board.

Nancy H., (past delegate Panel 49) of St. Helena, California, selected to serve as general service trustee on the Grapevine board, has been active in local, area and regional service functions since getting sober in 1988, most recently as a nontrustee director on the Grapevine board from 2009 to 2011. “My hope — which it always is for any job in A.A. — is that this will be another avenue for carrying the message.”

Nancy has had a varied work history, spanning commercial real estate investment and a family-owned information technology company specializing in telecommunications network architecture and implementation. When she first got sober, however, like many others in the Napa Valley, she was in the wine business. “But, after a few years I found it was a little hard to care how the cabernet harvest would be this year.”

Staying with the liquid refreshment theme, she went on to become the president and CEO of a specialty coffee roasting company. Ironically, Nancy notes, one of her favorite service positions in A.A. was that of coffeemaker at her home group.

Serving as general service trustee is an unexpected honor for Nancy, and she believes her experience working in her family’s business — “the idea of common background, common purpose” — will be helpful in finding the right balance to serve the Fellowship.

A.A.’s four new Class B trustees, plus the other ten already on the board, each serve one four-year term; the seven Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees serve for six years.

■ “A.A. Member — Medications and Other Drugs” ‘No A.A. Member Should Play Doctor’

While there are substantive changes in the 2011 General Service Conference-approved revisions to the pamphlet “The A.A. Member — Medication and Other Drugs,” one significant theme remains the same between the old and new versions: “No A.A. member should ‘play doctor.’ All medical advice and treatment should come from a qualified physician.”

This comment is further addressed later in the pamphlet with the shared experience that: “Because of the difficulties that many alcoholics have with drugs, some members have taken the position that no one in A.A. should take any medication. While this position has undoubtedly prevented relapses for some, it has meant disaster for others.”

It goes on to say: “It becomes clear [from experience] that just as it is wrong to enable or support any alcoholic to become re-addicted to any drug, it is equally wrong to deprive any alcoholic of medication which can alleviate or control other disabling physical and/or emotional problems.”

Throughout the pamphlet, including in the introduction and in several of the stories, emphasis is placed on the critical importance of an honest and cooperative relationship between the A.A. members who may need prescription medications for serious medical problems and the doctors who prescribe those medications.

Because the very subject of the pamphlet involves important medical decisions, a group of physicians who are friends of A.A. were asked to review the pamphlet. There is a new section called: Note to Medical Professionals, following the introduction. One paragraph of that section reads: “As noted in the introduction, some A.A. members must take prescribed medications. However, our experience indicates that the misuse of prescription medication can threaten the achievement and maintenance of sobriety. The suggestions provided in our introduction are offered to help A.A. members find the right balance and minimize the risk of relapse.”

What are some of the “suggestions provided in our introduction”? They include the one mentioned in the first paragraph above — “No A.A. members should ‘play doctor,’ as well as:

- Active participation in the A.A. program of recovery is a major safeguard against alcoholic relapse.
- Be completely honest with your doctor *and* yourself about the way you take your medicine. Let your doctor know if you skip doses or take more medicine than prescribed.
- Explain to your doctor that you no longer drink alcohol and you are trying a new way of life in recovery.
- Let your doctor know at once if you have a desire to take more medicine or if you have side effects that make you feel worse.

- Be sensitive to warnings about changes in your behavior when you start a new medication or when your dose is changed.
- If you feel that your doctor does not understand your problems, consider making an appointment with a physician who has experience in the treatment of alcoholism.
- Give your doctor copies of this pamphlet.

The revised version of this pamphlet is now available from G.S.O. (P-11; 25¢)

■ Staff Rotation at G.S.O.

There’s the return of the swallows to Capistrano, the running of the bulls in Pamplona, the Iditarod in Alaska, and, of course, staff rotation at the General Service Office. Perhaps not as grueling or as elegant as the aforementioned, staff rotation is an important part of G.S.O.’s service to the Fellowship, making manifest the spirit of Tradition Twelve and “ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.”

Rotation occurs throughout the A.A. service world — from the group level to the board of trustees — reemphasizing the importance of the message over the messenger. Begun in 1951 as a means of broadening the pool of knowledge and experience among staff members, providing a chance for each staff member to contribute, and minimizing any competitiveness among staff members, staff rotation has become a fixture at G.S.O. every two years since.

This year, staff rotation occurred on July 11, 2011. The new staff assignments are as follows:

Conference Coordinator, Eva S.: secretary to the trustees’ Committee on the General Service Conference and the Conference Agenda Committee; co-secretary of trustees’ and Conference Committees on International Conventions/Regional Forums; handles Western Canada regional correspondence, June-November; alternate Spanish correspondence, June-November; responsible for *Final Conference Report* and the Conference issue of *Box 4-5-9*; coordinator for 2015 International Convention.

Cooperation With the Professional Community, Adrienne B.: co-secretary of the trustees’ Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities; secretary of the Conference Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community; handles East Central regional correspondence; liaison with other Twelve Step Fellowships; responsible for *About A.A.*

Corrections, Tracey O. (new staff member): secretary of trustees’ and Conference Committees on Corrections; handles West Central regional correspondence; responsible for *Sharing From Behind the Walls* and Corrections Correspondence Service.

Group Services, Jim M.: secretary of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter; secretary A.A.W.S.

Services Committee; handles Southwest regional correspondence; Intergroup/Central Offices liaison; responsible for Service Material and A.A. Guidelines.

International, Mary Clare L.: secretary of the trustees' International Committee; handles international (outside U.S./Canada) correspondence; coordinator of the World Service Meeting and responsible for *World Service Meeting Report* and Loners/International correspondence and *Loners/Internationalist Meeting (LIM)*.

Literature, Gayle S.R.: secretary of trustees' and Conference Committees on Literature; secretary, A.A.W.S. Publishing Committee; handles Southeast regional correspondence; responsible for *Box 4-5-9*.

Nominating, Warren S.: secretary of trustees' Committee on Nominating and Conference Committee on Trustees; handles Pacific regional correspondence; liaison with Remote Communities.

Public Information, Mary C.: secretary of the trustees' and Conference Committees on Public Information; handles PSAs and A.A. Membership Survey.

Regional Forums, Julio E.: co-secretary of trustees' and Conference Committees on International Conventions/A.A. Regional Forums; handles Eastern Canada regional correspondence; alternate Spanish correspondence (U.S./Canada) Dec.-May; French correspondence; responsible for Regional Forum reports.

Staff Coordinator/Web Services, Rick W.: secretary of Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions; A.A.W.S. director; responsible for G.S.O. *Quarterly Report* and A.A.W.S. Highlights; handles Western Canada regional correspondence Dec.-May.

Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities, Mary D.: co-secretary of trustees' Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities; secretary of the Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities; handles Northeast regional correspondence.

■ 'A.A. for the Alcoholic With Special Needs'

At the 2009 General Service Conference the process was begun to create a recovery pamphlet for alcoholics with special needs. The number of stories received for the pamphlet indicated a decided interest and need, and the draft of the pamphlet was approved by the 61st General Service Conference.

The pamphlet, containing stories from A.A. members with a wide variety of challenges, such as autism, brain damage, learning disabilities, blindness, deafness or hearing impairment, confinement to wheelchairs, etc., is now available in English, Spanish and French. (P-83, SP-83, FP-83; 40¢ each.)

In back issues of *Box 4-5-9* and files of early correspondence, it became evident that G.S.O. was receiving inquiries from people with special needs in the early days of the Fellowship.

A.A. Guidelines on Carrying the Message to the Deaf Alcoholic was developed in the late 1970s, and several years later the A.A. Guidelines on Serving Alcoholics With Special Needs was developed.

Since 1996 "Special Needs" has been the responsibility of a G.S.O. staff member (on various assignments), and in 2009 the trustees' Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment expanded its scope to include services to Special Needs/Accessibilities Committees and assumed oversight for special needs literature.

■ Literature Packages — new prices

Additional pamphlets have been added to the Literature Packages. New prices are: BP-61, \$21.70; BP-64, \$21.85; SBP-24, \$28.85; BP-23, \$96.45.



The new Special Needs/Accessibilities Kit (M-48; \$18.00) contains an assortment of pamphlets, an A.A. Grapevine and the Workbook, which can be purchased separately (M-48I; \$2.50).

AA Grapevine — Now a Multimedia Publisher

In answer to requests from many members of the A.A. Fellowship, the all new AAGrapevine.org Web site premiered May 2, 2011, at the 61st General Service Conference. A.A. members are invited to visit AAGrapevine.org to access a 7-day free trial before subscribing.

This new site is designed for the wider spectrum of the Fellowship—as an additional expanded resource for exist-



ing Grapevine and/or La Vña subscribers, and as a way to attract new readers.

The Grapevine is no longer limited to 64 pages per month. For the first time, stories

are being published exclusively to the Web site. As a result, more stories will now be published each month than could be published in the print magazines. The Web site will be updated frequently, allowing for the publication of new, original stories each weekday. The expanded capabilities of the site also feature more stories drawn from Grapevine’s archives. Every story will continue to go through the traditional editorial process.

Grapevine’s new online subscription offers several products in its all-inclusive subscription package. You will receive AudioGrapevine, the Digital Story Archives and current online issues of the Grapevine and La Vña magazines, in addition to Web exclusives and daily original stories. Both yearly and monthly online subscriptions are available. You may view the options for accessing GV & LV—digital or print—at AAGrapevine.org.

The site offers visitors and readers ample opportunities to share, interact or get involved, to read a sample story, go to the Share page, use the Sobriety Calculator, join in on the cartoon caption writing contest, learn a GV factoid, post an A.A. event on the online calendar or contribute your personal stories or art. Discover what the membership at large is thinking, or weigh in on iPoll.

Find resources on the Service Grapevine Representative’s (GVR) page or use the Rep’s Showcase to highlight your area’s events and photos. GVRs and RLVs (La Vña representatives) will find tools and connect on GrapeNet Forum or catch up with the monthly Dateline Grapevine letter featuring the latest news.

Spanish-speaking members will find the La Vña page helpful in providing news, including the bimonthly RLVs letter or how to contribute to LV en Espaol.

For ease of purchase, every GV item is showcased on our Store page, including the most recent items: the book

Spiritual Awakenings II; the recently reprinted *The Language of the Heart* (LOH); the 2012 anonymity-protected wall calendar; audiobooks and CDs.

As reading habits change in the world at large, so do the reading habits of our membership. A.A. Grapevine’s new site is becoming a community. If desired, readers and editors can share their favorite stories and links. The site allows access on multiple devices, from computers to tablets to smart phones.

A 61st General Service Conference Advisory Action gave the go-ahead to explore software applications (apps) for smart phones and tablets, to deliver stories and other means to make A.A. Grapevine magazines and items available via online sources. Notably, A.A. Grapevine is currently developing e-books, beginning with *The Language of the Heart*, in English and Spanish, for use on e-readers. And, for the first time, Grapevine magazine and products will be included in A.A. World Services Literature catalogue.

Our new Web site and online options, coupled with plans for e-books and apps, are keeping Grapevine in step with today’s world. Yet GV’s print magazine is here to stay. Rest assured, it will always be available in portable format to carry into a meeting or an institution, or to share with a sponsee.

Grapevine’s need for member support by subscriptions is ongoing. For the individual voices of A.A.s. to continue to share their experience, strength and hope in Grapevine, our shared goal is to be self-supporting.

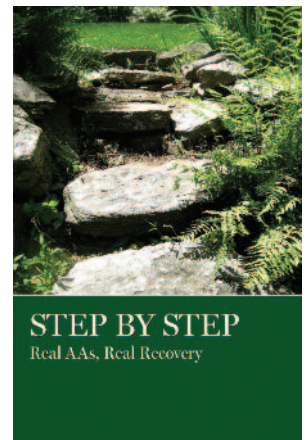
New Grapevine Titles



Bill W. identified emotional sobriety as “our next frontier;” a means to “real maturity and balance.” Several dozen A.A.s relate their experiences in reaching their own “quiet place in bright sunlight.” (GV-26; \$9.95)



Shared experience on working the Steps from A.A.s of all ages, and from various countries, lifestyles, and beliefs—stories from both newcomers and oldtimers. (GV-25; \$10.95)



■ Regional Forums

Regional Forums are weekend sharing sessions that provide A.A. members, groups, and area representatives with an opportunity to share and get answers to many questions with member of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members.

If you have never attended one you have missed one of the best shows in town. So sign up for the next Forum in your area. You may also register online: www.aa.org.

- **West Central** — September 9-11, Clarion Hotel & Convention Center, Davenport, Iowa.
- **Southwest** — October 7-9, Hilton Wichita Airport Executive Conference Center, Wichita, Kansas.
- **East Central** — November 11-13, Holiday Inn — Dayton Mall, Miamisburg, Ohio.

Corrections

■ 49 Years of Freedom Behind the Walls

(With Brief Interruptions)

Every Monday night for the past three years John L. has entered the maximum security Elmira Correctional Facility in Elmira, New York, at 6:00 pm, gone through security clearance and checkpoints and, after an hour of formalities, opened up The Hill Group A.A. Meeting. The meeting is from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm and welcomes anywhere from three to a dozen inmate A.A. members. The group celebrated it's 49th anniversary this June.

John used to attend the group in the 1980s. Back then, in what he terms the "group's heyday," Willie W. and Uncle Charlie C. were the primary outside sponsors of the group. John recalls that back then an outsider needed just to present a drivers license and be checked for outstanding warrants. They were also afforded the opportunity to have a lot more meetings, once even bringing in a hundred outside A.A. members and spending the whole day there with panels and meals. Today, security clearance is more thorough and involves a background investigation, finger printing and being designated as fully registered volunteers. John stresses though the importance of cooperating with the authorities and the importance of trying to carry the message to both the prison population and also the administration.

The meeting began in June, 1962, when an encouraging story about the A.A. meeting appeared in the local *Elmira Telegram*. The 25th anniversary of the group was written about in the July 1988 *Grapevine*. At some point in the last decade, however, the group's outside sponsors moved away from the area, and The Hill Group existed as it's own entity within the prison without any outside A.A.s attending. An inmate member sent a letter to the General Service Office

requesting outside sponsors for the group. That letter was forwarded to the Corrections chair of Elmira, who forwarded it along to the Elmira Intergroup, which is when John L. began the process of becoming an outside sponsor again along with Bob O. and Don H., who were instrumental in getting the group going again. Tommy O. is now a service mainstay, while an A.A. member called "Outlaw," has also been a steady presence at The Hill Group.

When they entered the facility for the first renewed meeting three years ago, they discovered that the man who wrote that initial request to G.S.O. had been transferred. They did not receive quite the warm welcome they had anticipated. Indeed, they barely recognized the proceedings as an A.A. meeting — "It was a bunch of guys sitting around playing cards," John L. recalls. "But slowly things started to come around," he added.

John L. stresses the importance of carrying the A.A. message, most especially into the prison system. "People take for granted that others know what A.A. is all about, but people don't know. It's important to talk about what Alcoholics Anonymous is and isn't."

He adds that the meetings are "terrific." Some of the inmate members of The Hill Group were sober members of A.A. in the community who relapsed and never imagined they would be coming back into A.A. in prison. John also points out that unlike other institutions, such as county jails, the inmates at Elmira Correctional Facility are in a maximum security prison — so aside from transfers within the prison system, the members of the group are not in transit residence. "Some of these men are serving thirty-year-long sentences. So this is their home for a long time. They take their home group very seriously."

While the security measures for outsiders to attend The Hill Group are thorough, the inmate members also make sacrifices to attend — at times they have to choose between attending the commissary or the A.A. meeting. The meeting unfolds at a comfortable pace — with two and a half hours every week, there is plenty of time for everyone at the meeting to share. The last Monday of every month, a group from Ithaca, New York, brings in a Big Book meeting. There is an attempt underway to obtain leather chips for Hill Group members to denote anniversaries. Back in the 1980s, there was a leather shop at the prison where the leather chips could be made. (Poker chips and metal chips are not allowed.) John also stresses the service that the inmate members of The Hill Group offer to A.A. "I'd really like to acknowledge the inmate members who have worked hard to carry the message to other inmates behind the walls," John says. "After the initial resistance was overcome three years ago, we had two terrific back-to-back inmate G.S.R.s — Kevin Q. and Steve M., both of whom have since transferred."

While John L. and the other outside sponsors bring in literature and general guidance, he says that he hears of many prisons that have no A.A. presence at all, and that a number of facilities are most in need of A.A. members willing to bring meetings to prisons. He adds that a mis-

conception about A.A. and prison life is the assumption that being confined means there is no access to drugs and alcohol. He mentions one former group member whose goal was to get sober before he left prison — his main source of income inside was as a manufacturer and bartender of “hooch.”

The benefits of this 49-year-old Hill Group of A.A. are enormous. “It is the freedom of a sober life, of having that attitude,” John says. “Anyone that I bring to the meeting, I can give them a guarantee of gratitude. I encourage our fellow AA members to take a meeting into a prison and not to be frustrated [by the security measures]. Even if the inmate members are not receptive, over time it will make a difference.”

■ Corrections Correspondence Services (C.C.S.)

We are in need of male A.A. members on the “outside” to correspond with male A.A. members in correctionals facilities and to share their experience, strength and hope. Most correspondents use their home address, some use a P.O. Box and others receive permission to use the group, area, or Intergroup P.O. Box. G.S.O. *does not forward mail*. Linking is done in the order received. To sign up for this service or for more information contact the Corrections Desk, G.S.O., P.O. Box 459, New York, NY 10163; corrections@aa.org or 212-870-3400.

■ The Group Business Meeting: Where A.A. Service Begins

Reprinted from Feb./Mar. 1990 issue of Box 4-5-9.

The 85,000 groups comprising A.A. today [108,000 in 2011] hold what co-founder Bill W. called “the ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services.” But where does this ever-lengthening chain of responsibility begin? Who has the authority to make it happen?

The entire structure of A.A. starts with the single group; and how each group conducts its affairs has a ripple effect on A.A. everywhere. The direction of the group is essentially determined at its business meetings, where the informed group conscience of the membership is voiced on matters ranging from group finances and policy to local intergroup and general service issues.

Recognizing the importance of group business meetings, some A.A.s in Seattle, Washington, prepared suggested guidelines on the subject for discussion at a Group Officers’ Workshop. Following are excerpts adapted from the guidelines. Says a district committee member: “We are sharing these in the hope that others will find them as helpful as we have.”

Who calls and organizes the business meeting? For

most groups, this is the function of the general service representative (or the group chairperson, secretary, treasurer, intergroup representative or steering committee, if there is one). Usually held on a monthly or quarterly basis, regular business meetings have been found to contribute significantly to group identity and unity.

When are they held? Since each group is autonomous, there is no one answer, but here are some ideas that have worked: Depending upon the amount of business to be discussed, announce the business meeting as starting 30 minutes or an hour before the regular meeting. Or else, hold it immediately after the regular meeting. In some instances, the business meeting is held simultaneously with the regular meeting, in a separate room and in the same manner that many groups have a “Step table.” Some groups have held business “potluck supper” meetings on nights other than those devoted to their regular meetings.

Who attends? Business meetings are generally open to group members only. Some groups invite A.A.s who are nongroup members to attend, but request that they refrain from voting on matters pertaining to the group’s activities. As with all group conscience matters, each A.A. member has one vote, and this, ideally, would be through their home group.

What kind of business is conducted? The agenda varies from group to group, issue to issue. But some aspects of group business remain fairly constant: electing new officers; scheduling new or different types of meetings; receiving and discussing the treasurer’s periodic financial reports; hearing progress reports from other group officers; and apportioning excess funds among the local intergroup, the General Service Office, the area and district treasuries, and more. The meeting might also plan interchanges with other groups or organizations and determine the group conscience concerning issues to be voted on at the area assembly.

In addition to their business meetings, many groups periodically take a “group inventory”—an honest and fearless discussion of the group’s weaknesses and strengths. Also helpful are “sharing sessions,” in which members can air any problems or offer suggestions on how to avoid them.

Meeting procedures: Most business meetings tend to be informal. But, if the need arises, Robert’s Rules of Order are generally applicable, so long as they don’t conflict with the Traditions. Many groups have found, however, that observing Robert’s Rules to the letter can be detrimental. Most members are inexperienced in parliamentary procedures, and some of them might feel too intimidated to speak up.

Before an informal group conscience can be defined, it is essential that the members be given all the facts relevant to the subject at hand. In many cases, an individual member, or a panel of members, is asked to look into the pros and cons of the issue and present them at the meeting.

■ A Brief History of A.A.'s General Service Office

A.A.'s General Service Office was born in a two-story office building at 17 William Street in Newark, New Jersey, in 1938, where the office was home to an ill-fated business venture undertaken by Bill W., just a few years after his last drink, along with his friend, Hank P., a fellow alcoholic Bill had sponsored out of Towns Hospital. Together, they rented an office in Newark for a cooperative buying organization of gasoline dealers known as Honor Dealers. They hired a secretary to keep things organized, a woman named Ruth Hock, to whom it soon became clear that the two men were really far more interested in helping a bunch of nameless drunks than they were in organizing gas stations.

It was here, in A.A.'s unofficial first office, that Bill produced the manuscript for the Big Book, with secretarial help from Ruth. And it was here that Bill and Hank formed Works Publishing Company, selling stock certificates to fellow alcoholics and their friends, a venture that led to the ultimate purchase of the company a few years later by the Alcoholic Foundation to ensure that the Big Book would forever belong to A.A. as a whole.

Providing an official home for the Fellowship was a project undertaken by the Alcoholic Foundation and in 1940 a modest two-room office was located at 30 Vesey Street in the downtown financial district of New York City. The rent was \$650 a month. "National Headquarters — Alcoholics Anonymous," as its letterhead read, was in business.

In no time, the little office was swamped, as the 1940s ushered in a period of expansive growth for A.A. The Rockefeller dinner, media exposure, and ultimately the Jack Alexander article in the *Saturday Evening Post* brought significant attention. "Came then the deluge," said Bill. "Frantic appeals — six thousand of them — hit the New York office. At first we pawed at random through the mass of letters, laughing and crying by turns. How could this heartbreaking mail be answered? It was a cinch that Ruth and I could never do it alone."

In May 1944, Headquarters moved into a three-room office at 415 Lexington Avenue, opposite Grand Central Station. "We made this move," wrote Bill, "because the need for serving the many A.A. travelers through New York had become urgent. Our new location near Grand Central brought us into contact with visitors who, for the first time, began to see Alcoholics Anonymous as a vision for the whole world."

By early 1945, the office had six full-time employees, though the needs of the Fellowship continued to mount. "A.A. was getting so big," said Bill, "that we could not possibly educate all members on what Headquarters was doing. Many groups, preoccupied with their own affairs, failed to help us at all. Less than half of them contributed anything. We were plagued with constant deficits in contri-

butions, which luckily would be plugged up with money from the sale of the Big Book and our growing pamphlet literature. Without this book income we would have folded up entirely."

As the office tried to keep pace, it moved yet again in 1950 to a larger office at 141 East 44th Street, still close to Grand Central Station and its hub of activity. The term "headquarters" was dropped at this time, replaced by the more descriptive name that it now holds, the General Service Office. Rotation was instituted among the staff secretaries and due to a number of relapses, new policies were introduced establishing a minimum sobriety requirement for alcoholic staff members.

The annual volume of incoming mail during this period of time exceeded 31,000 pieces, and over a million copies of A.A. books and pamphlets were sold. Additionally, correspondence with lone members such as Captain Jack S. was helping to formulate the Loners/Internationalists program of today, and the office began regular correspondence with Conference delegates regarding breaks of anonymity throughout the Fellowship. Along with these service activities, Works Publishing, which had been charged with oversight of the General Service Office, changed its name in 1953 to A.A. World Services, Inc., the name it still bears.

After a ten-year stopover at 305 E. 45th Street, G.S.O. was on the move again, this time to a location it would call home for the next 20 years. Taking space in 1970 at 468 Park Avenue South, the office ultimately occupied five floors in two adjacent buildings, housing the newly-opened Archives, the Grapevine, and including a conference room for A.A. board meetings.

To meet the demands imposed by such growth, where sales of literature were increasing by 25% each year, methods and procedures in the office changed dramatically. Automation was introduced wherever possible, especially in the areas of group records and A.A. directories. A microfiche system was put into place and G.S.O.'s first computer went online in September 1977.

The increase in the volume of publishing also led to major changes, with G.S.O. absorbing some of the functions of a major publisher, purchasing its own paper for the first time and getting more deeply involved in literature production and distribution.

Today, visitors to G.S.O. might well conclude that while the office at 475 Riverside Drive, where G.S.O. moved in 1992, is much larger than any of its predecessors, it still does what it always did, just on a vastly larger scale. As Bill W. wrote about G.S.O. in a message written as the finale to *As Bill Sees It*: "The A.A. General Service Office is by far the largest single carrier of the A.A. message. It has well related A.A. to the troubled world in which we live. It has fostered the spread of our Fellowship everywhere. . . [It] stands ready to serve the special needs of any group or isolated individual, no matter the distance or language. Its many years of accumulated experience are available to us all."

Quite a journey, indeed, from the little room on

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.

September

2-4—*Fortuna, California.* Redwood Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6943, Eureka, CA 95501; www.redwoodcoastroundup.org

2-4—*Monterey, California.* Monterey Bay Area Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 51777, Pacific Grove, CA 93950; www.mbar2011.org

2-4—*Wichita, Kansas.* 39th Conv. Hispana de U.S. y Canada. Inf.: Com. Org., Box 21047, Wichita, KS 67208; www.39convencionhispanadeusaycanada.com

2-4—*Abilene, Texas.* Big Country Conf. Write: Ch., 3157 Russell Ave., Abilene, TX 79605; abileneopendoor@gmail.com

2-4—*Jonquière, Québec, Canada.* Congrès du Saguenay. Écrire: Prés., 102, rue Napoléon, Chicoutimi, QC G7G 2T9; 89-23-info-pub@aa89.org

2-5—*San Francisco, California.* 53rd ICY-PAA. Write: Ch., Box 193431, San Francisco, CA 94119-3431; www.icypaahost.org

2-5—*Tampa, Florida.* 25th Tampa Bay Fall Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 262545, Tampa, FL 33685-2545; www.tampabayfallroundup.com

9-11—*Santa Maria, California.* 52nd Dist. Central Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6983, Santa Maria, CA 93456; www.centralcoastroundup.org

9-11—*Loveland, Colorado.* CO State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2968, Loveland, CO 80539; convention@coloradoaa.org

9-11—*Cromwell, Connecticut.* 53rd Area 11 Conv. Write: Ch., 112 E. Main St., Meriden, CT 06450; area11convention@ct-aa.org

9-11—*Davenport, Iowa.* West Central Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

9-11—*Park Rapids, Minnesota.* 21st Heartland Roundup. Write: Ch., 30284 Oakland Dr., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501; www.heartlandroundup.com

9-11—*Houston, Texas.* Area 67 Correctional Facilities Conf. Write: Ch., Box 925241, Houston, TX 77292-5241

9-11—*Richland, Washington.* Area 92 Forum. Write: Ch., 5240 Gene Dr. SE, Olympia, WA 98513; localforum2011@gmail.com

9-11—*Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada.* 52nd

Grande Prairie Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 85, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3A1; www.grandeprairieaa.com

9-11—*Canfield, Ontario, Canada.* 45th Dunnville Conv. Write: Ch., 130 York St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 6E4; dunnvilleconvention@hotmail.com

15-18—*Amarillo, Texas.* 65th Top of TX Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 412, Amarillo, TX 79105; www.topoftexasroundup.com

16-18—*Tampa, Florida.* 37th ILAA Conf. Write: Ch., 3715 W. Barcelona St., Tampa, FL 33629

16-18—*Hays, Kansas.* 54th Area 25 Conf. Write: Ch., Box 182, McDonald, KS 67745-0182; www.kansas-aa.org

16-18—*Pikeville, Tennessee.* TN State Conv. Write: Ch., 848 Livingston Rd., Ste 101, Box 118, Crossville, TN 38555

16-18—*Rimini, Italy.* 27th Conv. Info: www.alcolisti-anonimi.it

17-18—*Kingman, Arizona.* 28th Hualapai Mtn. Roundup. Write: Ch., 210 1st St., Kingman, AZ 86409; hualapaimountainroundup@yahoo.com

22-25—*Helena, Montana.* Nat'l Archives Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 498, Boulder, MT 59632; www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com

23-25—*Crescent City, California.* Sobriety By The Sea. Write: Ch., Box 871, Crescent City, CA 95531; sbs.rally@gmail.com

23-25—*Plymouth, California.* 25th Gold Country Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1077, Pine Grove, CA 95665; www.goldcountryroundup.com

23-25—*Grand Junction, Colorado.* Color Daze. Write: Ch., Box 4013, Grand Junction, CO 81502; www.aa-westerncolorado.org

23-25—*Somerset, New Jersey.* 55th Area 44 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1670, New Brunswick, NJ 08903-1670

23-25—*Charleston, West Virginia.* Area 73 Fall Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 1643, Charleston, WV 25326; www.aawv.org

23-25—*Gatineau, Québec, Canada.* 14^o Congrès Du Dist. 90-22. Écrire: Prés., 321 rue Notre-Dame, Gatineau, QC J8P 1L2

29-2—*Sioux City, Iowa.* Sioux City Tri-State Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1823, Sioux City, IA 51102; www.siouxcitytristateroundup.com

30-1—*Oxford, Mississippi.* Big Book Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 1556, Oxford, MS 38655; oxfordbigbook@gmail.com

30-1—*Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.* 43rd Autumn Leaf Roundup. Info: autumnleafroundup@aahamilton.com

30-2—*Rancho Mirage, California.* 60th So. CA Conf. Write: Ch., Box 65, Covina, CA 91723

30-2—*Lafayette, Louisiana.* Cajun Country Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3160, Lafayette, LA 70502; www.cajunaa.org

30-2—*Duluth, Minnesota.* 66th Duluth Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 16771, Duluth, MN 55816-0771; www.duluthroundup.org

30-2—*Smithville, Texas.* 27th Fellowship In The Pines. Write: Ch., 222 Cedar Ln., Cedar Creek, TX 78612; www.fellowshipinthepines.org

30-2—*Colville, Washington.* Roundup of Recovery. Write: Ch., Box 135, Chewelah, WA 99109

October

1-2—*Bemidji, Minnesota.* Area 35 Fall Assembly. Write: Ch., 1927 E. 21st St.,

Planning a Future Event?

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

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

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20____

Name of event: _____

Location: _____ CITY _____ STATE OR PROVINCE _____

Planning Committee address: _____ P.O. BOX (OR NUMBER AND STREET) _____

CITY _____ STATE OR PROVINCE _____ ZIP CODE _____

Web site or E-mail: _____ (NO PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESSES)

Contact person: _____ NAME _____ PHONE # AND/OR E-MAIL _____

Hibbing, MN 55746; www.area35.org

7-8—*Sherbrooke, Québec, Canada*. 41^{ème} Congrès du Dist. 88-02 & 88-15. Écrire: Prés., 104, 1140 13th Ave. N., Sherbrooke, QC J1E 3J4; aaasherbrooke2011@hotmail.ca

7-9—*Petit Jean Mountain, Arkansas*. ARKYPAA. Write: Ch., 1801 Georgia Ave., # 5, Little Rock, AR 72207; www.arkypaa.org

7-9—*Burley, Idaho*. Area 18 Fall Assembly & Conv. Write: Ch., Box 294, Jerome, ID 83338; www.idahoarea18aa.org

7-9—*Wichita, Kansas*. SW Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

7-9—*Hayti, Missouri*. 17th Bootheel Roundup. Write: Ch., 25122 State Hwy 25, Holcomb, MO 63852

14-16—*Montgomery, Alabama*. Area 1 Assembly. Write: Ch., 3981 North W St., Ste. 35, Pensacola, FL 32505; www.aaarea1.org

14-16—*Saint Augustine, Florida*. North FL Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 365 Titan Dr., Satellite Beach, FL 32937; pi@northflorida.org

14-16—*Mackinac Island, Michigan*. 23rd Fall Wknd. Write: Ch., 1915 E. Michigan Ave., Ste. D, Lansing, MI 48912; aalansingmi@att.net

14-16—*San Antonio, Texas*. Area 68 Fall Conf. and Voting Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 28683, San Antonio, TX 78228; www.aa-swta.org

14-16—*Angeles City, Philippines*. 16th Internat'l Fall Roundup. Info: aa_angeles_ph@yahoo.com

21-23—*Santa Barbara, California*. 27th Santa Barbara Conv. Write: Ch., Box 91731, Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1731; www.sbaaconvention.org

21-23—*Panama City Beach, Florida*. Celebration By The Sea. Write: Ch., Box 761, Panama City, FL 32402

28-30—*Prescott, Arizona*. Three Pines Conf. Write: Ch., 451 S. Hawes Rd., #33, Mesa, AZ 85208

28-30—*Branson, Missouri*. Colors of Fall In The Ozarks. Write: Ch., 220 N. Spring, Nevada, MO 64772; www.wamo-aa.org

28-30—*St. Julian's, Malta*. Sixth Internat'l Conv. Info: info@aamalta.org

November

4-6—*Mount Vernon, Illinois*. Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 132, Carmi, IL 62821; 2011tristate@charter.net

4-6—*Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong, China*. HK Internat'l Conv. Info: hkconvention@gmail.com

11-13—*Framingham, Massachusetts*. 48th MA State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 361, Weymouth, MA 02188; mastateconvention@aaemass.org

11-13—*Miamisburg, Ohio*. East Central Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

11-13—*Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada*. BCYPAA5. Write: Ch., 20449 Douglas Ct, Langley, BC V3A 4B6; www.bcpaa5.com

17-19—*Dubai, United Arab Emirates*. 9th MERCAA. Info: uaeconvention2011@gmail.com

18-20—*Cape May, New Jersey*. 5th Waves of Sobriety Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1724, Pleasantville, NJ 08232; www.wavesroundup.org

18-20—*Lake Geneva, Wisconsin*. 22nd McHenry Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 717, McHenry, IL 60051-0717; www.soberfest.org

24-26—*Miami, Florida*. Conv. Hispana. Inf.: Com. Org., 1770 W. Flagler St., Ste. 4, Miami, FL 33172

24-27—*Las Vegas, Nevada*. 45th Las Vegas Roundup En Español. Inf.: Com. Org., 730 N. Eastern, Ste 130, Las Vegas, NV 89101; www.lasvegasroundup.org

25-26—*Trois-Rivières, Québec, Canada*. 38^{ème} Congrès de Trois-Rivières. Écrire: Prés., lepointaa22@hotmail.com

25-27—*Ventura, California*. XIII Congreso Reg. Areas Ventura y Santa Barbara. Inf.: Com. Org., 1315 W. Gonzalez Rd., Ste J., Oxnard, CA 93036; oficina@aacondadodeventurasantabarbara.org

25-27—*Saint Louis Park, Minnesota*. Founder's Day Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 8327, Minneapolis MN 55408-9998; www.foundersdaymn.org

25-27—*Hamilton, Bermuda*. Bermuda Conv. Write: Ch., Box WK 178, Warwick, WKBX, Bermuda; www.aa.bm

25-27—*Fuengirola, Spain*. 22nd Costa del Sol Conv. Info: www.aaconventionspain.org

January

13-15—*Saint Augustine, Florida*. North FL Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 365 Titan Dr., Satellite Beach, FL 32937; pi@northflorida.org

19-22—*Mysore, Karnataka, India*. Mysore Internat'l Conv. Info: www.mysoreaaic2012.com

February

24-26—*Pattaya, Thailand*. Thailand Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1551, Bangkok 10112, Thailand; www.aathailand.org