



# BOX 4-5-9

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE OF A.A.

Vol. 20 No. 1

February-March 1975

## 1974 A.A. Survey Does Massive Twelfth Step Job, Proves Again That 'A.A. Works'

Were you one of the thousands of A.A. members who filled out anonymous questionnaires at meetings in the U.S. and Canada last summer? If you were, you did a true Twelfth Step job, though you'll probably never see its full results.

You were participating in our third "sobriety census" survey (the first two were in 1968 and 1971), the impressive results of which were announced in December. John L. (Dr. Jack) Norris, M.D., nonalcoholic chairman of our General Service Board, revealed the documented facts on lengths of sobriety, influences important

in joining A.A., occupations, sex, age, and other data on more than 13,000 A.A.'s.

The A.A. survey announcement was made at a press conference climaxing the prestigious North American Congress on Alcohol and Drug Problems, an international event that drew hundreds of the world's top-level medical, psychiatric, and other alcohol and drug specialists to San Francisco, Calif., Dec. 12-18.

The survey results are a triumphant reaffirmation of the effectiveness of our beloved program. *A.A. works.* Our survey proves it, and throngs of professionals who

have never been to an A.A. meeting or knowingly shaken hands with a sober A.A. can now send sick drunks to us with even more confidence than before.

Thus the sharing of your experience, if you filled out a questionnaire last summer, can help bring the gift of A.A. sobriety to countless people still suffering today.

### Survey Results

A statistician would consider the 13,467 survey respondents a more-than-adequate "sample," so  
*(continued on p. 6)*

### 1975 CONFERENCE AGENDA NEEDS WIDE CONSIDERATION

With "Unity—Through Love and Service" as its theme, A.A.'s 1975 General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada) will meet Apr. 21-26 at New York's Hotel Roosevelt.

Agenda topics already set (by the Conference Agenda Committee and the trustees' Conference Committee) include:

**Presentations**—Understanding and Living the A.A. Traditions (delegates share their experience); Group Support for Group Services; A.A.'s

*(continued on p. 5)*

*All at G.S.O. convey heartfelt thanks to everyone for sending such beautiful holiday greetings from far and near.*

### LOOK FOR CHANGES IN 'BOX 4-5-9'

A G.S.O. task force has been giving this newsletter a hard, close look for the past year, and you can expect some improvements as a result.

*(The survey questionnaire enclosed with this issue is one fruit of the task force's work.)*

They have come up with a preliminary draft of the "Philosophy, Purpose, and Goals" of *Box 4-5-9*.

It is submitted here for your consideration and comments. After you've thought it over, we'd love to hear what you think of the following:

*Box 4-5-9 offers perhaps the best means the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada), the World Service Meeting, the board*

*of trustees, and the General Service Office have of establishing contact and maintaining two-way communications with all A.A.*  
*(continued on p. 6)*

### PLEASE HELP IMPROVE 'BOX 4-5-9'

Please grab a pencil or pen and make some check marks on the enclosed questionnaire.

Don't sign your name, but do mail it back to us today.

We want to improve *Box 4-5-9*, but first need a searching, fearless inventory taken by Fellowship members.

Won't you use a few seconds to help us out right now? Thanks.

—Your G.S.O. staff

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## BIG-SCALE "INVASION" HIT THIS GROUP. WHAT THEN?

The town had only one tiny A.A. group, when all hell broke loose. Some local interest in alcoholism suddenly blossomed, and hospitals, newspapers, and the group were deluged with calls.

(It's not an unusual problem, of course. We keep hearing of groups aghast at being swamped with referrals from courts, hospitals, etc. But read on.)

For weeks and weeks, A.A.'s in this particular town ran about in desperate haste to make Twelfth Step calls. Clergymen, physicians, the A.A. members, and others were at their wits' end.

It was soon evident that a scheme of personal sponsorship would have to be devised for the new people. Each prospect was assigned an older A.A. who visited with him or her, told about A.A. principles, and went with the newcomer to meetings.

But in the face of many hundreds of alcoholics, the supply of older members could not possibly match the demand. Brand-new A.A.'s, sober only a month or even a week, had to sponsor alcoholics still drinking.

The one local A.A. group, which met in someone's home, quickly ran out of space, so other homes were thrown open for meetings—even the homes of nonalcoholics.

But these multiplying and bulging meetings continued to run short of space, and they fanned out into small halls and church basements.

Luckily, a few A.A. books and pamphlets were available. These were the guides and time-savers that probably kept the hectic situation from confusion and anarchy.

Oldtimers regarded this fantastic phenomenon with deep misgivings. In two years, littered with countless failures, the original group had produced only 20 good recoveries. Yet these not-very-experienced members were suddenly confronted by hundreds of newcomers. How could they possibly manage? No one knew.

But a year later, they *did* know. By then, the town had 30 groups and several hundred members. Growing pains and group problems had been terrifying, but no amount of squabbling could dampen the mass demands for help. And the results were so very good that, in nearby towns, it was believed the whole A.A. idea had started in this particular town!

The members had proved three essential things: the value of personal sponsorship; the worth of the Big Book and pamphlets in sharing with newcomers; and finally, the tremendous fact that A.A., given enough prospects, could safely grow to great size.

Sound familiar at all? What had started the "invasion" was a series of newspaper articles in the *Plain Dealer*. The town was Cleveland, Ohio, and the year was 1939. You can read more about it on pages 20-22 of "A.A. Comes of Age."

## REGISTER NOW FOR DENVER CONVENTION

To celebrate our 40th anniversary at the International A.A. Convention (Denver, Colo., July 4-6, 1975), now is the time to register!

For housing-reservation and registration forms, see your group's G.S.R. or write G.S.O.

You'll hit new peaks of sobriety. You'll meet Lois W. and thousands of A.A. friends from around the world amid the spectacular Rocky

Mountain scenery which makes Denver, the famous "mile-high city," an internationally popular vacation resort. It's the ideal place to share A.A. fellowship.

Many states and provinces are arranging their 1975 A.A. schedules so everyone can get to Denver.

All A.A. events and evening meetings will be at the Convention Complex, which has plenty of snack facilities and is an easy walk from 16 good hotels—including the Al-Anon headquarters hotel, site of special Al-Anon and Alateen sessions. Shuttle buses can whisk you to the complex from 32 other hotels and motels.

Day-and-night alkathons, dances, a big show, and A.A. rap sessions will bring together A.A.'s speaking in many tongues—but all in the language of the heart.

The \$15 registration fee covers all Convention events. See you in Denver, we hope!

## WHAT'S HAPPENING TO A.A. INTERNATIONALISTS?

The last *Internationalists Round Robin* of 1974, that meeting-in-print on sea-blue paper mailed bimonthly to our oceangoing A.A. family, raises some questions.

In November, it told our world travelers (mostly seamen), "There has been a sharp decline in correspondence from our Internationalist members during the last few months."

We do not know why. Do you?

Instead of the usual dozen or more wonderful letters ordinarily excerpted for *Round Robin*, there were only seven.

The issue ended with a suggestion which might bring forth more mail. It's an idea from new staff member Susan C., who is trying it out in one of her service assignments—*Loners Meeting*, another bimonthly bulletin. Each issue will be a Step meeting by mail, with two Steps suggested as the subject of letters for each edition.



## Trustee Corner

### 'A.A. KEPT TRYING TO TEACH ME'

As a G.S.R., I figured a district committee member was *important*. Then I became one – nobody else would do it! Later, I moved up to treasurer. Every man who took the job had died, leaving only me!

Soon after I became Conference delegate, I heard I had a special responsibility. Then I read what it was. At the opening ceremony, I was to call for a moment of silence – period. My first act as a delegate was standing one minute with my mouth shut.

Later, as intergroup chairman, I was to preside at Bill W.'s anniversary dinner. Whew! My good wife kept murmuring, "Easy does it," and I yelled back, "I'm perfectly calm!"

Then I proved how serene I was. Driving into the city, we stopped for gas. I got out and paid, then climbed back into the car. We just sat there, not moving. Finally, my wife spoke softly. "Ralph, you can't drive from the back seat."

Now, a retiring general service trustee, I think I hear what A.A. has been trying to teach me. I suspect it is *selflessness*. Our service counts; we don't.

– Ralph A., Glen Head, N. Y.

### ONE GOOD WAY A.A. SERVICE EVOLVES

In Anonymousville, U.S.A., a large urban area, A.A. started early in 1940 – as elsewhere, practically underground. One member listed his home number in the telephone directory for A.A. But the famous Jack Alexander article, in the *Saturday Evening Post*, brought thousands of newcomers in 1941.

Neighborhood groups – and squabbles – mushroomed. Glaring need forced formation of a central committee to coordinate things, and shortly a tiny central office opened, supported by only a handful of groups. It answered 2,500 calls its first year.

In the early 1950's, many such calls were still coming from 100 miles away, although big groups were then going all over the state. So, 90 miles away, one city's A.A.'s decided they needed their own local C.O.

That infuriated the old central committee – fearful of losing any financial support. But "peace overcame insanity" . . . and in the next issue, we'll tell you how good A.A. sense has prevailed ever since in Anonymousville.

## C.O. Corner

## G.S.R. Corner

### IN ALL FAIRNESS, WHO VOTES?

In one area, the large number of groups in the biggest city gave urban G.S.R.'s a numerical majority in the assembly, on a "one group, one vote" policy. Rural groups felt aggrieved, so the policy was changed to allow only D.C.M.'s to vote. (The city had five districts; outlying communities, nine.)

All clear so far? Looks fair, doesn't it?

Some G.S.R.'s were unhappy, however. They said *all* G.S.R.'s have a right to vote, and recently they prevailed. Now what?

Long-working G.S.R.'s feel outnumbered by new ones, frustrated by "drones" they have started calling "free-loaders."

According to our autonomy Tradition, no one can force a solution on that assembly, which can depend instead on the ultimate authority of a *loving* God, expressed in the group conscience.

How do you think divisiveness like this can be replaced with A.A. unity? Isn't our primary purpose helping alcoholics, not politicking?

How does *your* assembly work?

### HELP NEEDED FROM AREA COMMITTEES

Have you sent G.S.O. the latest complete list of names and addresses of all your Conference area committee members, officers, and G.S.R.'s? If not, please do, right away. Otherwise, important A.A. mail for these "trusted servants" in Third Legacy work goes astray and communication breaks down. *Please* help keep the chain of sharing in good repair.

\* \* \*

We like getting minutes of all Conference area committee meetings, assemblies, etc. They show interesting developments and differences. For instance, at a Canadian assembly in February, 55 G.S.R.'s gave enthusiastic oral reports, as did P.I.C. and institutions chairpersons. In Mississippi in July, 41 G.S.R.'s heard the delegate discuss two-hatters. In Southern Wisconsin, plans were made by 54 at the June committee meeting for a big convention, and redistricting and election procedures were adopted. But another state's quarterly meetings had 56 G.S.R.'s and 9 D.C.M.'s present in January, then 11 and 9 in May. In August, only 4 D.C.M.'s turned up! Nothing got done.

## Delegate Corner

## REPORT FROM G.S.O.'S GENERAL MANAGER

I plan to share with you, in this space, bits of news of G.S.O. that interest me, in the hope it will interest you, too. Although I have been active in A.A. a good many years, I have been on the staff here only since September, so I still view the office through a newcomer's eye.

On November 9, we had our annual G.S.O. open house. In three hours, 245 G.S.R.'s and other friends trooped through the offices on guided tours. They came from as far away as Massachusetts and Maryland—and points between. We wish you could have been there.

Incidentally, we welcome an average of 20 visitors a week, routinely. Our guest book shows, for November alone, travelers from India, Lebanon, Colombia, Switzerland, South Africa, New Zealand, Finland—plus U.S. and Canada. They include interested non-alcoholics, as well as members. Some were delegates homeward-bound from the World Service Meeting in London. Imagine how many we'll be hosting before and after the International Convention in Denver next July 4 to 6!  
—Bob P.

### WHY CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS?

"Please help me celebrate my 28th A.A. birthday next month," Jim W., Larkspur, Calif., wrote G.S.O., "by accepting the enclosed check for \$300." (That's the maximum contribution G.S.O. can accept from any one member in one year.)

"It is hard to believe that I have been sober 24 hours at a time for so many days," Jim said.

"Since I didn't have a crying dime when I started this program, anything I have now is all profit. Staying sober has brought me many wonderful things, of which

this check is only a small part. I hope it will help keep the line open for the other alcoholic who still suffers. All my love to you and, through you, to every A.A. everywhere, since you have all contributed so much in help."

Our nonalcoholic controller, Dennis Manders, has asked us to remind A.A.'s that *in memoriam* contributions, honoring a deceased member or relative, can be accepted only from A.A. members.

All contributions or bequests from non-A.A.'s are declined.

### DIRECTORY DEADLINE

Feb. 15, 1975, is positively the final closing date for the *Western U.S. A.A. Directory*.

If your group is to be correctly listed, the new, blue-bordered Group Information Cards mailed to G.S. Conference area committees and delegates Dec. 1 must be returned on time.

(Closing dates for the international, Canada, and Eastern U.S. directories are already past.)

The new *International A.A. Directory* (outside U.S. and Canada) becomes available next month from G.S.O.

### NEW TWO-HAT GUIDELINES

Now available is a newly updated version of A.A. Guidelines for Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field (Those Who "Wear Two Hats").

It conforms to the 1974 Conference action (reaffirming previous Conference actions) adopting unanimously the policy that "A.A.'s employed in the alcoholism field be eligible for election as trusted servants at all levels of service. . . . Criteria for choosing a trusted servant should be based on A.A. activities rather than on personal employment."

## THIRD 'ABOUT A.A.' FOR ALCOHOLISM PROFESSIONALS

The trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community distributed the third issue of *About A.A.*, a newsletter for professional men and women, in December.

It goes, free, to everybody employed in alcoholism who wants it. It tries to keep the alcoholism world informed *accurately* about our Fellowship.

The 1974 edition, also circulated at the North American Congress on Alcohol and Drug Problems in San Francisco, featured the results of our 1974 "sobriety census" (see main story on page 1).

*About A.A.* also contained facts about our 40th Anniversary International Convention, coming up July 4-6 in Denver, and a list of the new A.A. publications which we hope non-A.A.'s will read for a better understanding of our program.

Conference '74 advisory actions were reported, too—recommendations for more "cooperation without affiliation" and for discussion of two-hatters' dual role.

### MORE FACTS NEEDED FROM INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEES

Only 34 delegates returned the questionnaire on local institutions committees, mailed in June.

So the trustees' Institutions Committee, chaired by nonalcoholic trustee Austin MacCormick, urges delegates who did not respond in June to cooperate, please, and send in their questionnaires.

Other matters recently tackled by Austin and his faithful crew show most of us how ignorant we really are about life inside a correctional facility.

For example: Imagine yourself in a cell—where you will be for years. Now look at the questions on page 7 in "Memo to an Inmate Who May Be an Alcoholic."

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## INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEES

(continued from p. 4)

“Do you lose time from work due to drinking?” (*What work?*) “Does drinking make your home life unhappy?” (*Home life?*) “Do you want a drink the morning after?” (*After what?*)

We need more stories of A.A. inmates. How about it?

## N.C.A. HOLDS ALCOHOLICS CAN NEVER DRINK SAFELY

Claims that alcoholics can ever, under any circumstances, drink safely are called “misleading and dangerous” by the National Council on Alcoholism.

In a “position statement,” N.C.A. said that not-drinking is essential for recovery. It adds, however, that abstinence is not the sole measurement of recovery. “Other factors by which a person’s life is enriched are important, such as physical health, better work performance, and more rewarding relationships,” the N.C.A. statement declared.

As with any disease, according to N.C.A. Board of Directors Chairman T. G. Terbell, relapses (slips) may take place, “but must never be thought to indicate that recovery is beyond reach.” We in A.A. can only add a heartfelt “amen.”

On another recent occasion, N.C.A. President Dr. William S. Simpson called Alcoholics Anonymous “the most effective resource for helping alcoholics anywhere, any time.”

Isn’t it great we have such friends!

## AUTHORITY WITHOUT BOSSES

*This is the second in a series of articles on our Twelve Concepts for Service, excerpted from an A.A. convention talk.*

Concept Two tells us how to find out what the “collective con-

science” of A.A. is saying. It gives that conscience a voice—the General Service Conference.

It says (in part), “When the groups confirmed the charter for the Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.”

To me, the key words in this Concept are “the groups . . . delegated to the Conference *complete* authority.”

Does that make the Conference A.A.’s government? No. The second part of Tradition Two says, “Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” *Trusted* servants. The A.A. groups trust their delegates enough to give them authority.

How does this delegation of authority work in action—at the Conference? Very simply, the Conference is a mechanism of communication which enables the experiences of our trusted servants to be shared.

By the end of Conference week, Conference members will have talked over every subject on the agenda—at length! And then they wind up with a recommendation, an “advisory action,” *not* an order, of course.

Because all have been heard respectfully, the Conference can voice ideas for the Fellowship as a whole—the *collective* group conscience.

It works. And it has been working for almost 25 years now!

## MORE ABOUT OLDER ALCOHOLICS

A nursing home in Minneapolis, “geared primarily to the treatment of the geriatric alcoholic,” has written us about its A.A. group.

If you read the Aug.-Sept. ’74 *Box 4-5-9*, you may recall we wondered whether a group in a Connec-

tic nursing home was the first in such a facility. It seems the Minnesota one has been functioning at least since May 1974.

But we are not so concerned about who was first as we are about who is next. Our sobriety depends very largely on our helping the *next* prospect, as AA experience has so clearly demonstrated.

That’s why we still hope to hear from every state and province about getting A.A. meetings going in retirement villages, senior citizens’ clubs, and the like. These may be vineyards ripe for harvesting.

Please let us know about older alcoholics in your community, and what is being done to carry our message to them.

## 1975 CONFERENCE AGENDA

(continued from p. 1)

Twelve Concepts for Service; the A.A. Grapevine.

**Workshops** — Traditions; Understanding the Role of the A.A. Who “Wears Two Hats”; Our Twelve Concepts for World Service. An unstructured workshop will have no prepared questions or topic.

**Discussion Topics** — (1) the role of the district committee member; (2) A.A. literature (Is there too much? Is it too specialized? Is it becoming a substitute for person-to-person contact?); (3) sponsorship (Is it slipping or only changing?).

All A.A. groups and assemblies are urged to discuss all agenda topics soon, and share conclusions with your elected Conference delegate. That way, the whole “voice of A.A.” can be heard when delegates seek to express the group conscience of the entire Fellowship in April.

Meetings of ten Conference committees, a 90-minute Ask-It Basket session, Panel 25 delegates’ Service

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