

BOX 4-5-9

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

Vol. 25, No. 6

Holiday 1980

Money and Spirituality Can Mingle—in A.A. Giving

A longtime member recently took stock of her A.A. giving: "You know, as I was planning my Christmas shopping this year, I realized how much more I spend on gifts now than I did when I came into A.A., more than 20 years ago. I compared that with what I put in the basket at meetings, and I still give the same dollar bill — only today it's worth less. That was quite a revelation to me, and now I've begun putting at least two dollars in the hat at every meeting."

In these days of galloping inflation, with most groups paying high rents (and coffee prices), it's easy to lose sight of the impulse to give. Yet many A.A.'s are tossing more

into the hat, and at the holiday season, groups often make a point of showing their gratitude by extra gifts of money, as well as time and service.

November and December business meetings frequently discuss additional contributions in gratitude to service entities such as intergroups, area committees, and G.S.O. Special thank-you checks also go to non-A.A.'s who help by setting up meeting rooms, making coffee, or performing other services in churches and other meeting places.

And holiday parties are part of the season's giving, though members usually make special donations

— of food, time, or money — rather than taking funds from group treasuries for social events.

One New York City group holds an annual Thanksgiving Day buffet for A.A.'s who are alone on that day. And all over North America, group Christmas and New Year parties help members, new and old, get through the often-difficult holiday blues.

The holidays, though, are only one special time for giving. In reality, it's what we do all year round. Increasingly, A.A.'s are realizing that money is *not* a dirty word. Money and spirituality do mix, and gifts of money are one of our most
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Sponsorship Today— What's Your Experience?

True or false?

1. Sponsorship is not needed as much these days. T___ F___
2. Newcomers suffer most from lack of sponsorship. T___ F___
3. The "voice of the group conscience" of A.A. (the General Service Conference) is not concerned with personal sponsorship. T___ F___

Ask our G.S.O. visitors. Look at our mail from you. Check the *Conference Reports* of the past several years. You'll find resounding "False!" answers to all three.

And you'll find an overwhelming consensus that . . .

1. Sponsorship is needed now more than ever, because treatment centers, industry programs, and others are now sending so many ready prospects to A.A.

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Dear Friends . . .

The Christmas message of love and peace that surrounds the world fills us with joy, as a great and loving miracle is celebrated.

Each day, we A.A.'s experience the miracle of sobriety, sustained only because it is shared. And because we have this wonderful gift, we are privileged to participate in the peace and happiness of this holiday season. At this time, we who once lived in the fear and isolation of alcoholism are especially reminded how truly blessed we are.

Bill W. wrote that "the joy of good living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step." All of us at your G.S.O. send our warmest wishes for your every happiness as you share this message, now and during the coming year. May you and all you hold dear be graced with the joy of Christmas and the peace of love freely given.

June *Vinnie* *Jo* *Lyla* *Beth*
Lain *Susan* *Phillis* *Debra*
Sarah *Curtis* *Frank* *Betty*

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TO ALL GROUPS IN CANADA:

Good news! Your central offices and intergroups are now able to order A.A. literature and have it delivered within three to five days from a new warehouse distribution center, located in Rexdale, Ont.

Be sure to encourage your C.O. or intergroup to take advantage of this service, so that you can order directly from your local office, saving both time and possible custom-house aggravation.

THE MESSAGE IS HEARD ON A.A. TAPE CASSETTES

A letter from Madison, Wis., prompted the thought that a listing of taped materials would be useful. The writer says:

"Thank you so much for getting the Big Book on tape. I have trouble with my reading, and have been trying for three years to read the Big Book. Most of what I have gotten from it has come through meetings and marathons. Thank God for people who can and do read and in turn go and speak of it to others like me. Please send me one set of tapes of the Big Book."

Should you, too, want tapes of A.A. materials, for yourself or a friend, cassettes now available from G.S.O. are: "Three Legacies, by Bill" (\$3.50); "Voices of Our Co-Founders" (\$3.50); "Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions" (\$3.50); and "Alcoholics Anonymous" (first 11 chapters, first two stories—\$25). All are listed on the Fall 1980 Literature Order Form.

SEASON STIRS MEMORIES OF OUR CO-FOUNDERS

Recent showings of "Markings on the Journey," our filmstrip depicting 45 years of A.A. history, have generated new interest in facts about A.A.'s co-founders.

This season marks two significant A.A. dates concerning them. Dr. Bob, who was born August 8, 1979, died November 16, 1950; and Bill W., born November 26, 1895, died January 24, 1971.

Their stories appear in the Big Book and "A.A. Comes of Age"; "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers" recalls their first meeting, while drawing a full-length portrait of the co-founder who left us just three decades ago. Our pamphlet "The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous" (20¢) gives their last major talks as well as brief biographies.

The Grapevine's memorial issues (January 1951 and March 1971) are now available as a packet (\$2).

SPONSORSHIP TODAY

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2. The sober members not sponsoring newcomers are the people in most danger of losing—both one of the greatest protections against slips, and the great rewards of Twelfth Step work.

3. At our Conference for some years now, the question of "declining sponsorship" has been seriously discussed at length under various headings, its reports show.

Those who feel uneasy are not just some bleeding-deacon oldtimers bleating that the "good old days" were better. On our A.A. trips, we at G.S.O. hear the same concern voiced by A.A.'s in various places, in several ways.

It is sad to report that some professionals working with alcoholics raised the same subject. None of us in A.A. has any business criticizing other A.A.'s, of course. But we may be hearing one of the most serious criticisms ever aimed at our beloved Fellowship when a doctor

in a clinic or rehab center asks, "Why can't we get local A.A.'s to help our patients?"

We have been told that newcomers are not welcome in a few meetings if the prospects are known to come from a hospital alcoholism unit.

Perhaps some members are not aware of the early A.A. experiences in Akron City Hospital, Towns Hospital, and others.

At one of the summer schools on alcoholism, a counselor said that when she asked A.A.'s to sponsor clients from her agency, the answer was: "You do it. After all, that's what you're paid to do."

That counselor is *not* paid to take A.A.'s Twelfth Step (or Third, Fifth, Ninth, or any of the others). We do not know whether or not she is in A.A. But if she is, she takes the Steps for her *own* recovery, as all the rest of us do—not because anybody pays her to do so. A.A. is nonprofessional, of course; but treatment agencies are not.

So what can we do to provide our unique help and guidance to the thousands of prospective new A.A.'s, detoxed and ready to learn, referred to our groups each year?

Do we still remember what Bill W. discovered when he wanted a drink in the Mayflower Hotel in Akron that Saturday in May 1935? He remembered the effect on him when he had visited patients at Towns Hospital, although none of them had seemed ready to sober up—yet. That effect was crucial in his own recovery. "The only way to keep it is to give it away," as we have all heard many times.

Do we remember how Dr. Bob repeatedly "treated" himself when he got edgy and felt he wanted a bit o' grog?

One member we know recommends to all newcomers that they read especially Chapter Seven in the Big Book. (It begins, "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity against drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.") Later, he gives them copies of our pamphlets

“How A.A. Members Cooperate” and “A.A. in Treatment Centers.”

Any A.A. who has ever visited a bedridden alcoholic and seen that first timid shine of hope in a scared sick person’s eyes, cannot forget it.

If you have ever felt tears coming suddenly when you saw that same sick person clean, grinning, and chatting at a meeting a short while later . . .

Or felt that shiver of pleasure we get when a new person we have sponsored first leads or speaks at a meeting . . .

. . . You probably have many good experiences to share with the rest of us about sponsorship, so please write us about them soon.

Nobody — repeat, nobody — in A.A. can tell anyone else in A.A. what to do. No conference, no committee, no office, nor anyone else. And we at G.S.O. would not have it any other way. But experiences can be shared—right? Ask your group. Ask all your A.A. friends.

Do you think sponsorship in A.A. is important? What can be done to maintain or improve it?

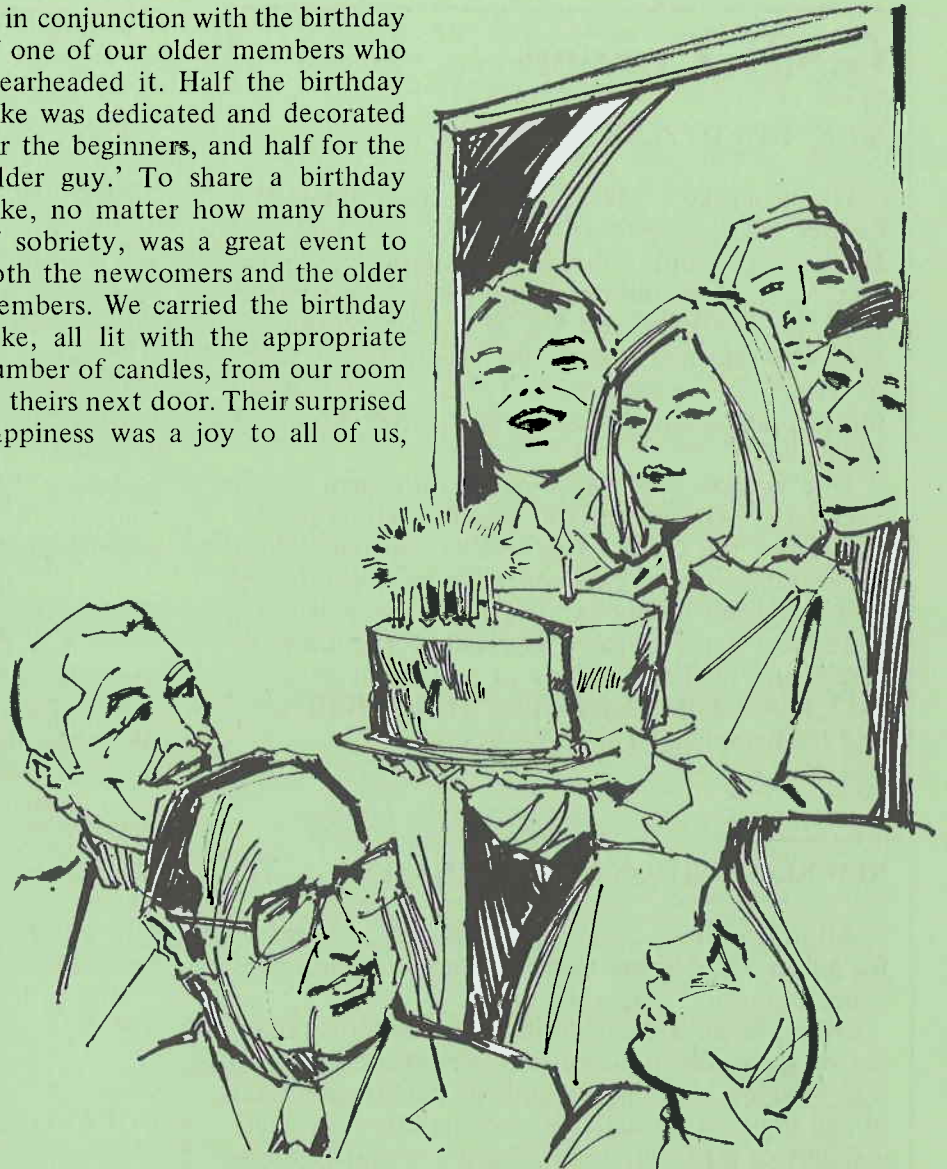
BEGINNERS MEETINGS ROUSE READER ENTHUSIASM

The article on beginners meetings in the April-May issue sparked a good deal of interest and response. A sampling of letters includes notes on a beginners group that recently celebrated a first birthday, and another that has an especially well-organized approach we want to share.

From Vero Beach, Fla., Jean R. tells us: “It is a rough jolt to find out about living a life without alcohol or mood-changing drugs, and the newcomer needs warmth and love in the beginning. We opened our beginners meeting on this premise, offering sponsorship and a monthly leader who, we feel, can carry the message in a warm and joyous manner. It has worked!

“We celebrated the first birthday of our beginners group recent-

ly in conjunction with the birthday of one of our older members who spearheaded it. Half the birthday cake was dedicated and decorated for the beginners, and half for the ‘older guy.’ To share a birthday cake, no matter how many hours of sobriety, was a great event to both the newcomers and the older members. We carried the birthday cake, all lit with the appropriate number of candles, from our room to theirs next door. Their surprised happiness was a joy to all of us,



sponsors and those sponsored.”

Caswell S. of Westport, Conn., writes about a beginners group for men there that has been running successfully for more than 14 years:

“We have an average attendance every week of 55. At his first meeting, every newcomer is given a literature kit, which contains the following material: our ‘Newcomer’s Booklet’ (compiled from questions actually asked at meetings over the years); a telephone list (with numbers of about 50 men with one year or more sobriety); a medical information sheet (listing doctors knowledgeable about alcoholism, and recommending that the new person have a physical exam); the pamphlets ‘This Is A.A.’ ‘44

Questions,’ ‘Is A.A. for You?,’ ‘The A.A. Group,’ ‘Understanding Anonymity,’ and ‘Questions and Answers on Sponsorship,’ the excerpt ‘How It Works,’ the A.A. wallet card, and a list of all meetings held at the group’s meeting room each week.

“The meeting urges getting a sponsor (or two or three) as soon as possible. We have a complete display of A.A. literature at each meeting, and the literature chairman is called on to talk about the value of literature.

“If we were asked to estimate the success of our meeting, we’d use the telephone list as one measure. We’ve never had to remove a name because someone got drunk!”

G.S.R. Corner

SOME TIPS TO PERK UP SHARING

Guest speakers have made for lively interest at district sharing sessions, according to Frank and Lejeune D., both district committee members (D.C.M.'s). Presentations were made by past delegates, area officers, and D.C.M.'s from outside the area who had not been heard locally before. Gifts of Grapevine subscriptions (when the Grapevine representative was discussed) and coffee breaks also helped.

One session was "Become an Informed Group Secretary," with presentations on A.A. structure and, especially, the G.S.R. This was set up particularly for members whose experience has been mostly limited to group affairs. Among materials distributed were local items prepared especially for group secretaries, the leaflets "Circles of Love and Service," "G.S.R.," and "Self-Supporting? The 60-30-10 Plan," and the pamphlet "The A.A. Group."

NEW RECOGNITION OF ALTERNATES

Although often unseen and rarely heard, alternates for all service jobs are more and more recognized as being important—even essential.

Often, when a delegate or area committee chairperson has suddenly become ill, a good alternate who was working with the incumbent has stepped right in and kept service activities moving smoothly. General service representatives, district committee members, and others sometimes have to move away or resign for other reasons, so it helps when they, too, have knowledgeable, experienced standbys.

Reflecting increased appreciation of the vital roles alternates can play, the 1980 Conference recommended new material on them for the 1980-81 edition of "The A.A. Service Manual" (to become available by the end of this year). Additions in four places will advise that "alternates should be encouraged to assist, participate, and share in responsibilities" of each job concerned, "where feasible, depending on local needs." (On pp. 48-49 of the 1980 *Final Conference Report*, Advisory Actions 55 through 59 give the complete wording of added or changed material.)

Local autonomy, of course, determines whether alternates become voting members at committee and area business meetings. But has your area explored *all* the possibilities of utilizing alternates?

Delegate Corner

Trustee Corner

'CATCH MEDICAL STUDENTS EARLY'

New nonalcoholic trustee William Flynn, M.D., got to know A.A. when he was developing courses in alcoholism at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., where he is currently assistant professor of psychiatry. With the cooperation of many A.A.'s, he began a program in which members "sponsored" medical students one-to-one—taking them to meetings, answering questions, giving ample information on A.A.

"If you catch medical students early," he says, "before their attitudes are settled, they're very open to the A.A. experience. A high percentage of medical students have alcoholism problems in their families, and go back and steer family members to A.A. or Al-Anon. Many, too, keep coming to meetings on their own, and learn to use the principles of the program in their own lives."

Bill Flynn's first experience as a trustee came at the 45th Anniversary Convention in New Orleans, where he was "impressed with the openness, the spirit, and the vitality of A.A. I was made to feel welcome, very much a part of it."

And to that, we say: You are!



DOES YOUR COMMUNITY NEED A C.O.?

If you've ever wondered how a new central office (C.O.) gets started, the experience of the Worcester (Mass.) Intergroup should help. George Y. talked about it in a workshop at the 1980 Convention:

"Worcester and surrounding towns represent nearly 400,000 people, and had been served by the Boston Intergroup. Many alcoholics did not call, because it was an expensive toll call. In summer 1972, we discussed the possibility of our own central office. We called G.S.O. and received encouragement and help, including the central office Guidelines and suggestions from the Traditions and Concepts.

"We held a meeting, with all groups invited to send a delegate and alternate. Asked whether there was a need, they responded with a resounding yes.

"A meeting was set up with the Boston Central Service Committee; problems were discussed and
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Central Office Corner

CENTRAL OFFICE CORNER
(continued)

tentative boundaries set up. We secured an answering service, and delegates brought in names for a Twelfth Step list.

"Groups pledged contributions; an office location committee was formed; officers and committees were elected; bylaws were put together; and purposes were stated. The location committee leased space, and with donations of time and talent from members, the office was ready by December 1974.

"The office is now staffed with one paid full-time worker, and the original 40 or 50 calls per month have grown to well over 500. Elections are held yearly for trusted servants, and there are several functioning committees.

"We can't recommend enough the importance of communication with G.S.O., the use of Guidelines, and the principles of unity, responsibility, sharing, and rotation."

A.A. GIVING
(continued from p. 1)

important expressions of gratitude and responsibility.

Responding to this growing awareness of financial responsibility, service workers are making an effort to see that members are aware of the needs. The Washington Area Intergroup Association has found an effective way to help groups make decisions about contributions. Office manager Jim M. writes:

"About a year ago, the W.A.I.A. put together a form for group contributions. Because of the nature of our illness, many of us who have been elected treasurer of a group never had a bank account while drinking. For nearly all of us, management of money was a mess. The purpose of this form is to simplify the treasurer's job. It also provides a simple, convenient form for his or her records. Distribution is made

to all groups as an insert with the minutes of monthly intergroup meetings.

"Both the W.A.I.A. and the Washington area assembly have reported healthy increases in contributions since we have been using the forms. We believe that G.S.O. is benefiting proportionately, too. Two other intergroups, in St. Paul, Minn., and Wilmington, Del., have been using the same form."

Quarterly acknowledgments (clearly stating, "This is not a bill") go to each group, listing its contributions for the past four years. If the group has not contributed, the acknowledgment includes an offer to attend a group meeting and discuss whether the intergroup is giving adequate service.

Area service committees are adopting a similar approach. From Northern Illinois, Myrtle E. writes about a letter sent to all groups, along with a copy of the "60-30-10" pamphlet. She tells us that the letter outlines some of the services performed by the area committee, and it goes on to say:

"While adequate funds for these services are necessary, it is even more vital that members contribute their own time and effort to carry the message. Please be sure your group's members who are willing to do such service work are listed with their service committees. Remember, our gift is unique! No one else can carry *our* message as effectively as we can."

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To support A.A.'s essential services, the General Service Conference recommends that groups follow the "60-30-10" plan. It works like this:

First, take care of basic group expenses (rent, refreshments and A.A. literature).

Divide remaining funds as follows:

CONTRIBUTING ACCORDING TO TRADITIONS

Date _____
TOTAL AMOUNT TO BE CONTRIBUTED.....\$ _____
60% TO INTERGROUP.....\$ _____
30% TO GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE.....\$ _____
10% TO GENERAL SERVICE ASSEMBLY.....\$ _____

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SEVENTH TRADITION... A.A. accepts no outside contributions at any level. Likewise, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SIXTH TRADITION, A.A. makes no contributions to any outside organization or cause, no matter how worthy.

(Keep this slip for your records)

60% to your Intergroup or Central Office.

Make check payable to: W.A.I.A.
Mail to: WAIA Central Office
Room 110
4530 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

WASHINGTON AREA INTERGROUP ASSOCIATION
GROUP _____ DATE _____
SENT BY _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
TEL. OF SENDER _____ AMOUNT _____

30% to your General Service Office.

Check payable to: General Fund
Mail to: General Service Office
Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, N.Y. 10163

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE
GROUP _____ DATE _____
SENT BY _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
GROUP SERVICE NO. _____ AMOUNT _____

10% to your Area Committee.

Make checks payable to: G.S.A.
Mail to: General Service Assembly
Box 5673
Friendship Station
Washington, D.C. 20016

GENERAL SERVICE ASSEMBLY
GROUP _____ DATE _____
SENT BY _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
TELEPHONE _____ AMOUNT _____

