

Dear Friends,

As the holiday season nears, the mail at G.S.O. increases with expressions of gratitude from A.A. members and groups all over the world.

A former inmate, turned Conference delegate from Colorado, gave a presentation on A.A. in prisons at the 1982 General Service Conference. He said, "Because someone cared enough to show regularly, to share honestly, and to be there my first night out, my sponsor's promise to me is a reality: I have not had to go back. It has been 12½ years free and 14 years sober now."

At the Seventh World Service Meeting, the chairperson of the Mexican General Service Board stated in the closing talk, "Alcoholics Anonymous is an instrument of God, as each of us understands Him, to restore the most marvelous work of the universe, the human being. All members of A.A. work as instruments of God. They are privileged in seeing clearly and in perspective a remarkable duality: on the one hand, to be restored to again project the light of improvement and love to people around them; and on the other hand, simultaneously to be the anonymous artists helping others to restore their own lives."

And an Internationalist recently wrote us from on board ship: "Today, my sobriety depends on my letters. Oh, I might still be sober without them, but it is so much richer with good A.A. mail. Thank you for keeping me sober one more 24 hours. Hope I can return the favor someday. I'll try! God bless you. I love you all!"

So it is that our hearts are filled with gratitude to each of you for your continued support of the work done here to carry A.A.'s message of hope to all alcoholics who still suffer, wherever in the world they may be. In the words of our co-founder, "We salute you, and thank you for your lives."

with A.A. love,

*June
Lain
Suzanne
Susan
Curtis
Lyla
Phyllis
Bete
Sarah
Beth*



Nell Wing Retires With A Headful and Heartful Of A.A. History

In March 1947, Nell Wing was passing through New York City, on her way to Mexico to study art. A little short of cash, she took a temporary job at the office of the Alcoholic Foundation (forerunner of the General Service Office). In December 1982, Nell will retire from G.S.O. after more than 35 years of service to A.A., most recently as A.A.'s nonalcoholic archivist.

What does she plan to do? Among other things, go back to school and resume her interrupted training in

sculpture. Another top priority is working as a volunteer at Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital, where she had successful surgery for cancer in April 1982. Any spare time (and no one who knows Nell can imagine her having any) will be filled with catching up on reading, museum visits, needlepoint (she's already halfway through one "retirement" project)—and sleeping late.

Nell has done just about everything at G.S.O. She served as co-founder Bill W.'s secretary for years and, on the side, acted as receptionist/clerk/stenographer/switchboard operator, librarian, editor and designer of various publications (including *Box 4-5-9* for many years), and Conference "bouncer" in 1951 (stationed at the door to make sure that only those engaged in Conference business came in). Finally, she was the prime mover in setting up, organizing, and overseeing the A.A. archives.

Each of these jobs was a form of service for Nell, and she speaks lovingly of every kind of A.A. service from answering phones to her long involvement in the General Service Conference. Her introduction to the Conference took place the first time she met Bill W., when our co-founder, in place of the expected small talk, launched into an explanation of the Conference and the trouble he was having in persuading A.A.'s to go along with the then-radical idea.

By 1973, the archives claimed Nell's full time. The seed of the archives (which now burst the bounds of four rooms on the fifth floor at 468 Park Avenue South) began germinating in the early 1950's, when Bill started collecting oral histories from pioneer members. A short time later, old group records were taken out of storage—"moths and all"—and Nell began the exacting job of sorting, organizing, and preserving them. In addition to obtaining many more oral histories, her task included acquiring and processing data from local groups, indexing, microfilming, preserving co-founders' letters and records, putting together scrapbooks of A.A. memorabilia—etc.!

And the archives at G.S.O. were not all; Nell worked hard encouraging areas to begin collecting and preserving their own histories. To aid in that process, she compiled a handbook of guidelines for area archives and inaugurated the newsletter *Markings: Your Archives Interchange*. Today, largely as a result of her enthusiasm and determination to preserve the lessons of the past and help ensure A.A.'s future, about 60 areas in the U.S. and Canada and ten overseas have archives.

Nell has spread the archives message in recent years by speaking at A.A. events, sharing with spellbound members her 35-year love and knowledge of A.A. (She also admits, rather modestly, to a 1973 appearance on the Dick Cavett show, where the first question she was asked was: "What's all this about anonymity?")

It's hard to imagine G.S.O. without Nell's bubbling enthusiasm and endless fund of information. Luckily for us

all, she plans to stay in the New York area and keep in touch. So it's not goodbye, but *au revoir* to Nell, as she moves on — but never away.

How A.A. Is Reaching The Hearing-Impaired

Since you're reading *Box 4-5-9*, you have very likely spent some time in A.A. meeting rooms and done some communicating with your fellow alcoholics. It's easy; you need only have the willingness to stop drinking, walk through a door, go up or down a flight of stairs possibly, walk into a room, sit in a chair, and listen.

It is not so easy for the blind alcoholic, who needs to be guided to early meetings, or the crippled alcoholic, who can't negotiate the stairs up or down to the meeting room — and it is even more difficult for the deaf alcoholic. The message must in some way be "heard" if it's to be successfully shared.

As we reported in the August-September *Box 4-5-9*, G.S.O. is now equipped to receive calls from deaf alcoholics. Our TDD machine consists of an ordinary telephone attached to a keyboard. When the phone rings, it is placed in a cradle next to the keyboard. The incoming message then appears in typed form, and G.S.O. types the answers on the keyboard. Of course, the same equipment is required at the other end, and TDDs are installed in many clinics and other agencies around the country.

The first call to our TDD number—1 (212) 686-5454—was placed by Robin Y. in Corpus Christi, Tex. While it actually took only a few minutes, we received a fairly thorough education in a new area. The facts are: (1) Robin placed the call to try out the new TDD number and to obtain for the newsletter of the Deaf Council in Corpus Christi information on material that G.S.O. offers to the deaf alcoholic; (2) Robin attends three meetings a week but has an interpreter for only one, and that meeting is truly "wonderful"; (3) she has worked on rephrasing the Twelve Steps in less abstract terms, so the deaf can com-

Box 4-5-9 is published bimonthly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 468 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1982

Mail Address: P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

Subscriptions: Individual, \$1.50 per year; group, \$3.50 for each unit of 10 per year. Check — made payable to A.A.W.S., Inc. — should accompany order.

prehend them more readily, and has sent the result to G.S.O.; (4) through her participation in A.A., she has stopped being "mad" about being deaf and is instead grateful and happy.

Not long after our "talk" with Robin, the TDD phone rang with our first Twelfth Step call. Marilyn S., just out of treatment in Seattle, Wash., was eager to attend A.A. meetings, as recommended, but was unable to find any with an interpreter present. Our letter of inquiry to Seattle Intergroup brought forth encouraging news: (1) That office had just arranged for interpreters at two weekly meetings; (2) its newsletter had asked for members "who would be willing to 'sign' their own home-group meetings when needed"; (3) a list of deaf members willing to twelfth-step deaf newcomers was being compiled; (4) and Marilyn herself was hard at work setting up an A.A. meeting for deaf alcoholics at a local hospital.

The use of interpreters can sometimes create dilemmas, such as whether or not a non-A.A. interpreter may "sign" a closed meeting. A simpler problem was targeted in the Salt River (Ariz.) Intergroup newsletter, which relayed a plea from the local meeting for the hearing- and vision-impaired: wanted — one "tall stool for the interpreter," so that her eloquent hands could be seen all over the room.

Now that the great need is more widely recognized, various means of helping the deaf are being explored across the continent. A.A. offices ready with TDDs include those in Pittsburgh, Pa., San Jose and Los Angeles, Calif., and Houston, Tex. From Boston, Mass., Margaret A. writes that the A.A. group for the deaf in Cambridge celebrated its first anniversary this year.

Hearing-impaired members, Margaret notes, are also taking part in A.A. activities beyond the group level, such as the 1982 Western Massachusetts Roundup. It was a "bilingual" (voice and sign) event; around 17 deaf A.A.'s attended (one was also blind); and enough interpreters were available to make it a real success. The roundup was a two-way learning experience, Margaret says— "Hearing and deaf A.A. members learned from each other and about each other."

Hold That Cash!

At this season, many of you want to show your gratitude with contributions, or order A.A. books, booklets, or subscriptions as gifts for friends. Again, play it safe — please don't mail cash to G.S.O.! Express your generosity in terms of checks or money orders.

◆ And how about a "happy holiday to us" wish for your group? With each special bulk order (left), ten members can enjoy *Box 4-5-9* throughout the coming year.

Spanish-Speaking A.A.'s Report Rapid Progress

"Aquí no se habla español." That seemed to be the word the first Spanish-speaking members got from A.A.: "Spanish is not spoken here." Meetings were conducted in English, and all available A.A. literature was written in that language. But "the language of the heart" has no nationality. Those pioneer members heard the A.A. message, began to translate the literature, and formed the early Spanish-speaking groups.

Ricardo (Dick) P., reported to be the first Spanish-speaking A.A. member, came into Cleveland's Orchard Grove Group in 1940. Dick had difficulty reaching out to fellow Mexicans who he felt needed the program, so he encouraged his wife to translate parts of the Big Book into Spanish. By 1946, she had translated the entire book, and Dick delivered it to co-founder Bill W. in New York.

At approximately the same time, the first Spanish-speaking group in New York City, Grupo Hispano, was formed. Its meetings started on a bench in the park opposite the site where Lincoln Center now stands. The three founders, Maria, David, and Frank, soon moved to a church on West 156th Street (where the Grupo Desperatar meets today), and Frank also did a translation of the Big Book.



This desk at New York Intergroup is ready with books of twelfth-stepper lists and literature like "El Sendero de Vida" ("As Bill Sees It").

A letter to the old Alcoholic Foundation office from the despairing wife of an alcoholic in Mexico eventually brought about the first Spanish pamphlet. The office sent the woman copies of "This Is A.A." and the Twelve Steps. The husband got sober, had the pamphlet translated, and started an A.A. group in Mexico. Of the 25 copies of "Esto Es A.A." that he had printed, 12 were sent to the New York office.

That handful of Spanish-speaking pioneers has now grown to approximately 400 groups in the U.S. and Canada listed with the General Service Office. In 1965,

New York Intergroup listed two Spanish groups with three meetings a week; today, there are 33 groups holding 79 meetings a week. Among the separate Spanish intergroups, central offices, or service committees are those in New York, Chicago, Washington (D.C.), Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Antonio.

As well as carrying the message to the still-suffering Hispanic alcoholic — often in treatment centers and places of employment — members participate with the A.A. community as a whole. Many Hispanics also go to and are active in English-speaking meetings; some English-speaking A.A.'s go to Spanish meetings to share their stories and to learn the language.

Andres S., of New York, recently came to G.S.O. to talk with the general manager and deliver a copy of the proceedings of the tenth *Convención Nacional de Alcohólicos Anónimos de Habla Hispana de U.S.A., Canadá y Puerto Rico*, which was held in Denver in early September. The Spanish-speaking A.A. groups in our service structure would like to work more closely with G.S.O., and the G.S.O. staff is anxious to participate in an exchange of information and services.

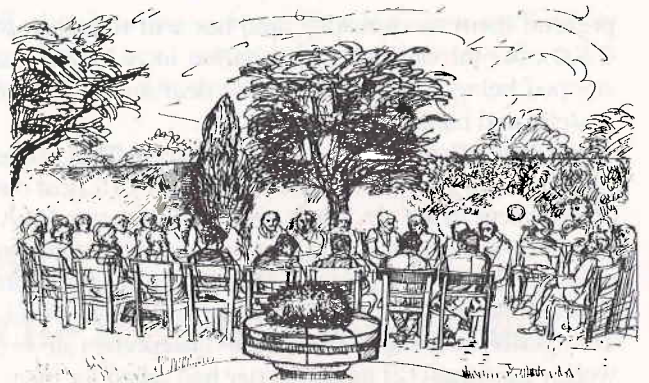
On the international level, the Seventh World Service Meeting (see story below) was the first W.S.M. to offer simultaneous translation—English and Spanish.

In the archives at G.S.O. are the first copies of the early translations of A.A. literature into Spanish—rough-typed, mimeographed, some hand-bound. Today, a shaking newcomer who reads only Spanish can be handed one or more of seven Conference-approved A.A. books, 26 pamphlets, and five flyers, or a wallet card in Spanish. The complete Spanish Order Form — new this year—may be obtained by writing to the General Service Office.

And the bulletin you are reading has been available in a Spanish edition for exactly 15 years now—this year, in the same format as the English edition. *Aquí sí se habla español!*

1982 World Service Meeting: Business Plus Spirituality

The Seventh World Service Meeting, held October 14-18 in San Juan del Rio, Mexico, proved once again that A.A.'s tested principles of service can be effective worldwide. Coming from 22 nations, the 38 delegates represented A.A. in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Central America (Northern Zone), Finland, French-speaking Europe, German-speaking Europe, Great Britain, Holland, Ice-



On the eve of formal W.S.M. sessions, a "red ball meeting" (catch it, and it's your turn to share) helped participants get acquainted.

land, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Trinidad/Tobago, U.S./Canada, and Uruguay.

Discussions at the Hotel La Mansion, in the countryside about 90 minutes' drive from Mexico City, often centered on problems and challenges familiar where our Fellowship has had more experience and growth. And answers were often found in the pages of Bill W.'s accurately titled "Twelve Concepts for World Service."

The Concepts were the topic for one of the workshops at the W.S.M., and it became clear that these principles are cherished wherever an A.A. service structure has become strong enough to participate in the W.S.M. In Mexico, the Concepts are sometimes displayed right up on the walls of A.A. meeting rooms, alongside the Steps and the Traditions.

The biennial sessions of the W.S.M. are patterned after the annual general service conferences of U.S./Canada and other countries. They include: presentations followed by floor discussions; special reports; workshops; brief service talks by delegates serving for the first time; committee meetings; and consideration of the committees' reports.

Because the W.S.M.—so far—has fewer delegates and shorter sessions than the Conference, it has only four committees: Agenda, Literature/Publishing, Policy/Admissions/Finance, and Working With Others. (The last combines cooperation with the professional community, correctional facilities, public information, and treatment facilities.) The kinds of subjects considered at the Meeting are indicated by this sampling of 1982 committee opinions:

- Countries selling only A.A. literature were experiencing little or no difficulties; countries selling more non-A.A. literature were having problems.
- Sometimes, Conference-approved literature is too "American" to fill the needs of other countries; they might obtain permission from A.A.W.S. to make necessary adaptations.
- Since more women are coming to A.A., countries might consider "degenderizing" literature other than

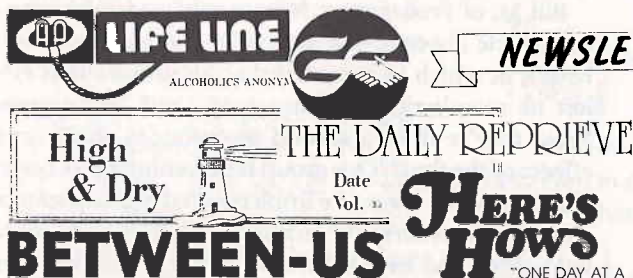
the Big Book and "Twelve and Twelve," so that women might more readily identify. (A.A.W.S. began that process with pamphlets and booklets five years ago.)

- "The World Service Meeting Takes Its Inventory" is suggested as the theme for the 1984 W.S.M.
- Countries are encouraged to invite W.S.M. delegates from other countries to attend their general service conferences as nonvoting observers, to gain more knowledge of "working with others" in various ways.

Each W.S.M. is definitely a working occasion, concentrating on service business. But throughout all its sessions, there is the exhilarating sense that it is also a spiritual enterprise, with "one primary purpose." It's A.A., after all. And there is often the light touch, the little gesture of friendship across thousands of miles.

At the Seventh, one of the waiters at the hotel spoke a quiet aside to one of the delegates: "You A.A.?" The delegate allowed as how he was — almost all of them were. The waiter grinned and jabbed himself in the chest. "Me, too!" he said.

And that's not all. Another waiter confided his worries about his own drinking problem to another delegate — who promptly put him in touch with the first waiter. Presto — an A.A. meeting! It takes just two.



Newsletter List Now Available From G.S.O.

A.A. members love to communicate with one another: at meetings, at conventions and get-togethers, over coffee cups — and through more than 150 independent newsletters that are listed in a new piece of service material available without charge from G.S.O.

Faithful to our Ninth Tradition ("A.A. . . . ought never be organized . . ."), the newsletters are spontaneous and autonomous and differ widely in style, content, and appearance. They may be published by intergroups or central offices, by area committees, or simply by individual members or informal committees, moved by a desire to share their sobriety with others.

Most of the publications carry news of intergroup/C.O. or area events, as appropriate to the source, and

items on group happenings. Notices of upcoming conferences or conventions are prominent. The newsletters often reprint selections from A.A. literature (with proper credits) and borrow heavily from one another. However, many of them are also vehicles for original material: personal stories and articles about Steps, Traditions, and issues of importance to the Fellowship. These publications are gold mines of aphorisms and humor.

Although the G.S.O. list covers newsletters only in the U.S. and Canada, A.A. entities in many other countries throughout the world publish newsletters of their own.

Members who are interested may write G.S.O. for our List of Newsletters in the Fellowship.

First Friend of Prison A.A. Dies

As warden of San Quentin Prison in California, Clinton T. Duffy welcomed the very first A.A. group behind bars, in 1944 (see pages 89-90 in "A.A. Comes of Age"). His death on October 11, at age 84, recalled the debt we owe him for his faith in our then-young Fellowship.

A fitting memorial would be the involvement of still more "outside" members in helping A.A. "inside." Especially, the Institutions Correspondence Service needs more volunteers to exchange letters with inmates. If you're interested, just ask Susan D. (on the correctional facilities assignment at G.S.O.) to add your name to the list of twelfth-steppers-by-mail.

Countdown to Directory Deadline Begins

Or perhaps "countup" is the better word. In this Fellowship, it's a rare day that a count goes down. For instance, our last annual checkup on the number of groups in the U.S. and Canada showed a net gain (allowing for disbanded or merged groups) of 2,281—in just one year.

Trying to keep up with changes is a daily job for district and area committees and G.S.O., but the autumn of the year is checkup time. That's when each of the 91 area delegates receives a bundle of computer printouts—one for each group in his or her area. And that's when trusted servants from Point Barrow to the Florida Keys put on their snowshoes or roll up their sleeves in a massive effort to get the records straight. It's a sharing time when G.S.O. asks the Fellowship to count the groups' noses,

