



AA EXCHANGE BULLETIN

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

Holiday Issue 1964

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CAN ONLY ONE MD. HELP ANOTHER M.D.?

It may not take a painter to 12th-step a painter, but naturally a doctor may be more impressed by another doctor's opinion of a disease than he is by a layman's opinion.

On the other hand, every physician is impressed by the living evidence before him of a recovered alcoholic he had thought to be hopeless, according to what we hear from the International Conference of Doctors in A. A., from our mail, and from two recent "Grapevine" articles.

Maybe if you go back to see your doctor, and tell him the story of your recovery from alcoholism in A. A., he can help another doctor to understand how A. A. works, and sick alcoholics will have another friendly doctor in their corner.

"To make a friend, be one," the old proverb says. Worth a try?

When is 'Breaking My Anonymity' NOT an Anonymity Break?

When you tell your story to a sick newcomer who has asked for A. A. help, is that an "anonymity break"? When you stand before A. A. Groups and say, "My name is Joe and I am an alcoholic," is that an anonymity break?

groups ask...

...about anonymity all the time, like this:

"On anniversaries we run in the penal publication the picture of the speaker, with his permission. Is it wrong to give recognition to these men who have only our interest at heart?" — Indiana.

"I got mail from an insurance company saying I could have lower rates as a non-drinker. How can I find out who broke my anonymity, and what should I do about it?" — Pennsylvania. *TO PAGE 3*

Generally no.

Most of us feel, though, that getting your name, picture, and A. A. story printed for personal profit or fame is a violation of our 11th Tradition.

But there are many difficult borderline cases (see column at left). Each one is different. At G.S.O. we make no judgments of "wrong" or "right" in such matters. Nevertheless, experience, checked each year with your Delegates, suggests some guidelines. Here they are:

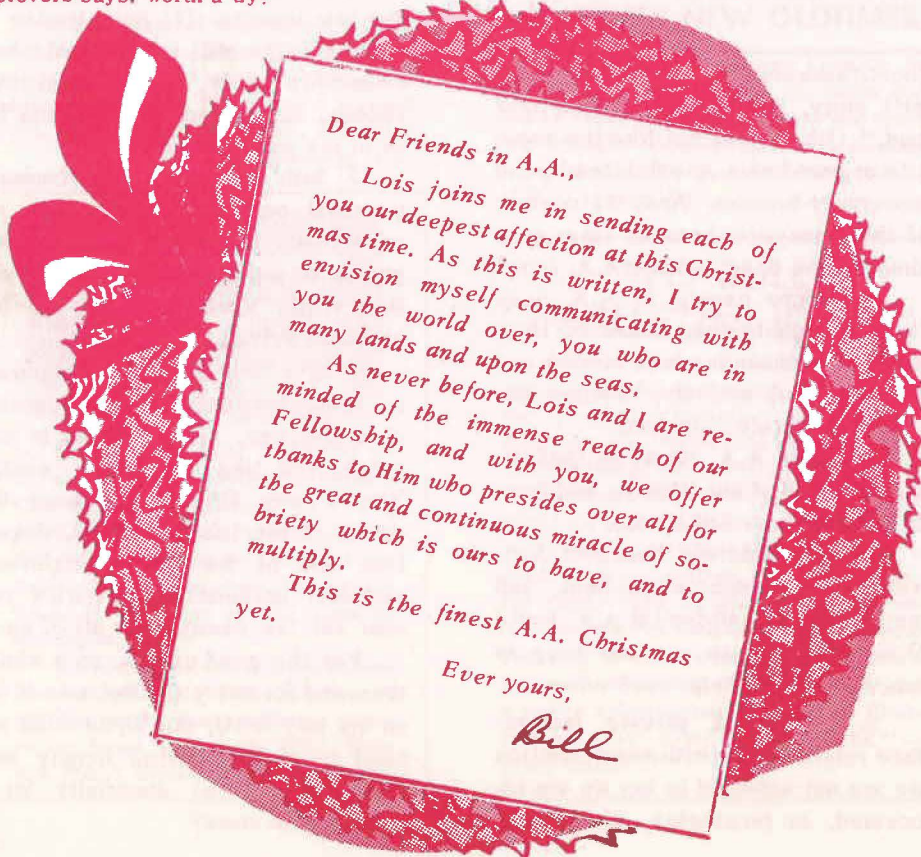
1. The word "anonymous" in our name is a promise of privacy.

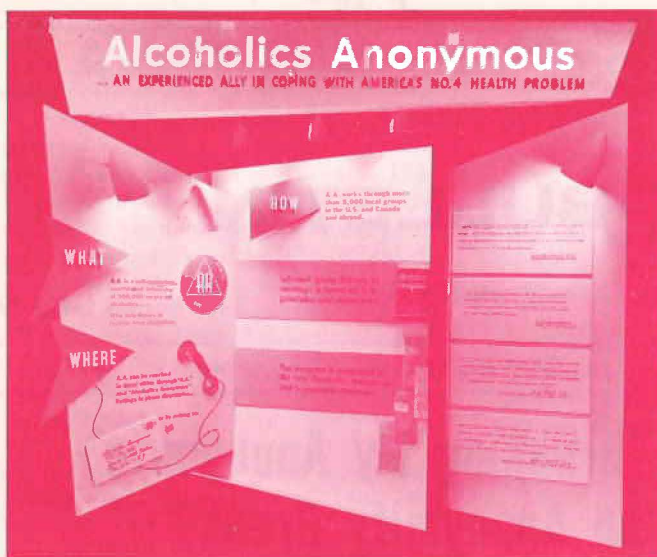
Most of us do not want to cater to the cruel stigma unjustly attached by ignorant people to the disease of alcoholism. But we have to face the fact that the stigma exists, and that people suffer from it.

Therefore to those who have trouble with their drinking, who feel ashamed and guilty about it, who are afraid people will find out, we say "Come on in. We understand, because we have been there. We'll try to help, and we promise you the private refuge of anonymity."

2. We demonstrate that promise by keeping strict anonymity for ourselves and everyone else in A. A. at the public level.

For the press, radio, TV, films, or meetings open to the nonalcoholic public, we never reveal last names or any other identifying facts about any A. A. member. *TO PAGE 2*





A.A.'s in Nine Cities Man Our Professional Exhibit

Many doctors, nurses, judges, welfare workers, school administrators, teachers, penologists, hospital officials and alcoholism clinic workers heard of A.A. or increased their understanding of it this year, and A.A. members in nine cities pitched in on this gigantic message-carrying job.

Twelve national groups of professional people asked G.S.O. in 1964 to set up our exhibit showing what A.A. is, where it is located, and how it works through local Groups.

ANONYMITY — FROM PAGE 1

We do not put "A.A." on envelopes sent through the mails. In material to be posted on A.A. bulletin boards, and printed A.A. programs which the general public might see, we omit last names and identifying titles of all members. Television shows and news photographs do not show A.A. members' faces. In news stories, we are identified by first name and last initial only.

3. We don't think it's a good idea to drum up business for A.A. with testimonials from celebrities.

Occasionally someone asks, "Don't big spectacular anonymity breaks help 'carry the message,' and encourage people to come into A.A.?"

They probably do. But they also keep people out. Some stay out for fear *their* anonymity will be broken,

This colorful, brightly lit exhibit is 7½ x 7½ feet. It contains a jacket of the Big Book, "Alcoholics Anonymous," and four pamphlets: "A.A. for the Woman"; "A.A. — 44 Questions and Answers"; "Alcoholism the Illness"; and "A.A. and the Medical Profession." Endorsements of A.A. by four famous people are shown.

Anonymous volunteers at the booth answer questions, distribute "Helpful Ally" leaflets, and take literature orders.

Thanks to the foresight of Delegates to the 1956 General Service Conference, the exhibit was ready, and A.A. did not lose these opportunities to describe our program and help prevent misunderstandings of it.

Local A.A. members manned the booth in Los Angeles, Calif., Tampa, Fla., Chicago, Ill., Kansas City, Mo., and Cleveland, O. Theme of the exhibit is: "Alcoholics Anonymous—Helpful Ally in Coping with America's No. 4 Health Problem."

too. Others hear the anonymity-breaker's story, then say, "I'm not *that* bad." Others may not like the sober life or brand of A.A. exhibited by the anonymity-breaker. And, of course, if the anonymity-breaker later gets drunk, how does it make A.A. look?

Far more people in A.A. *keep* their anonymity than break it. Hundreds of thousands, both famous and obscure, work actively, unashamedly—and privately—in A.A.

4. Within A.A. itself we quit being ashamed of our illness, and freely exchange our full names.

We keep address books of A.A. names and telephone numbers, and we publish a confidential A.A. World Directory—all so we can keep in touch with, and help, each other.

5. In personal, private, face-to-face relationships with nonalcoholics we are not ashamed to say we are recovered, or recovering, alcoholics.

Besides, this often helps carry the message to others.

This in no way violates our Tradition about *public* anonymity. When you tell the facts about yourself, privately, it's not an anonymity break.

Besides, passing on our experience, strength and hope to other alcoholics is too important to let any fear of discovery or stigma stand in our way. If Bill and Dr. Bob had said "People wouldn't understand," and hadn't passed the message on, where would we all be?

THE PEN SLIPPED

"Soon after becoming a member I wrote a client asking him to rush me the number of his policy.

"Later I saw the carbon copy of the letter I wrote. It said:

"Dear Mr. Gomez: It is imperative that you have a spiritual experience by return mail."

"Believe me, I had been impressed at the meeting the night before."

—Carol, Fresno, Calif.

6. We do NOT hide our alcoholism in guilty secrecy out of fear and shame. That would actually strengthen even further the cruel stigma that unfortunately surrounds the victims of our illness.

We remain anonymous in public for two reasons: (1) our promise of privacy to the still-suffering alcoholic and his family, and (2) a spiritual reason, summed up in Tradition 12, or in the word *humility*.

7. With anonymity, we renounce personal prestige for our A.A. recovery and work, and place the emphasis on our principles—the Power that really heals us—not on our personal selves.

That's why Dr. Bob, discouraging plans for a massive A.A. memorial mausoleum, said, "I want to just get buried like anybody else." That's why Bill turned down the dream of his life, an LL.D. degree from one of the world's mightiest, proudest universities. Those two men set the example for all of us.

For the good of A.A. as a whole, then, and for every alcoholic in it (or on his way to it), don't you think we need to keep thinking deeply and spiritually about anonymity for a long time to come?

GRAPEVINE GOODIES

December

An aid to Emotional Sobriety; The Silent Sponsor; In the Place for Drunks; Rosemary Spoke at the Rally; Christmas Illumination; Distaff Definitions; Lonesome Road; Sorting Out the World; Geographic Sobriety; On Closed Meetings; My Name is Neva; 1964 Grapevine Index.

January

Problems Other than Alcohol, by Bill; After Sobriety, a Psychiatrist; Important New Laboratory Findings on Alcoholism; Symbol of a Fresh Start; Senile Sobriety; The Treasurer's Report; On Making Simple Amends; On Making Complicated Amends; Holiday Cheer--a la Mocha; My Name is Not Jane; Ten New Years; and A.A. in Florida Road Prisons.

SPECIAL GIFTS TO G.S.O.

OCTOBER 1964

ILLINOIS: Chicago - 1964
Chicago Area and Suburban
Illinois Intergroup \$500.00
MICHIGAN: Ypsilanti - Central
Michigan Intra-Area Council. . \$ 18.42
PENNSYLVANIA: Cooksburg -
Cook Forest Conference . . . \$333.00
VERMONT: Windsor - Roundup . \$223.42
VIRGINIA: Blackstone Retreat. . \$100.00

NOTE: All contributions received through December 31, 1964, will be shown in 1965 Directory.

A FIFTH OF WHAT?

"The seventh of this month I'll be sober four years. I counted my money so long in half pints I still can't get used to dollars and cents. Just lately I learned to ask for a quart, not a fifth, of milk."
--R.S., Jennings, La.

30th Anniversary
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
JULY 2-4, 1965 TORONTO

Stickers like this, reminding all of us of A.A.'s 30th Anniversary Convention in Toronto July 2-4, 1965, are available *free* in rolls of 500 for Intergroup and Central Offices. Since they bear the letters "A.A.," they can *not* be used on envelopes.

Notice on the Convention Poster you got with this Bulletin: Groups will get registration and hotel reservation forms in January, 1965. Then it's **FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED.**

HER GOLDEN JUBILEE

"She is 80 years old, weighs 80 pounds and works 80 hours a week," said the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* recently in an editorial salute to Sister Mary Ignatia, observing her golden jubilee as a member of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. Now at Rosary Hall, St. Vincent Charity Hospital, Cleveland, she has 12th-stepped over 10,000 alcoholic.

Maybe hospitals and doctors who are reluctant to take alcoholic patients would like to hear of her experience. Maybe A.A.'s who say "Only an alcoholic can help another alcoholic" would like to know that Sr. Ignatia is *not* an alcoholic (read Pages 7, 8, 14, 19, 20, 67, 134 and 178 in A.A. COMES OF AGE). And maybe lots of us would like to write her in gratitude.



GROUPS ASK . . . - FROM PAGE 1

"Our Group mails out a bulletin showing the complete names of all incoming speakers, and the names and telephone numbers of our officers. This is only for use by A.A.'s, of course. Is this OK?"--Brooklyn.

"Don't you think it's time for A.A. to drop anonymity? It was necessary in the early days, but not now. I don't care who knows I'm sober."--Texas.

We at G.S.O. don't pass out "rulings" on these questions, of course. But we can share with you some opinions and experiences of many A.A.'s on anonymity.

ANOTHER NEW OLDTIMER

"I have a grandmother living in Maine who joined A.A. at 86. Since she was 12 years old she had drunk old cider and straight alcohol split and smoked three packs of cigarettes a day."--Al W., Chicago Ill.

TWO BULLY 'BULLETIN' IDEAS

"Here's my A.A. Christmas Card list, and a dollar for each name. Please send the "Exchange Bulletin" for a year to those people. Everybody likes the A.A. news it brings us."--F.C., Texas.

"Several months ago the Group decided to subscribe to the *Bulletin* for each regular member, and each was to pass it on to another. We used to have the Group copy on the table, but no one took the time to read it, and no one knew anything of A.A. outside of Arizona. It has worked out beautifully. We now give a year's subscription to each new Chairman we elect every three months."--J.B., Arizona.

PRAYERS AT MEETINGS

"A Briton in the U.S.A. was ribbed for closing the meeting with the Serenity Prayer. 'What the heck,' said a local, 'We don't need it twice.'

"A Canadian in Britain stirred a great buzz by using the Lord's Prayer. Said a local bloke, 'I'm blown if I came here to have my soul saved.'

"Perhaps we shouldn't rib visitors. If the chairman would explain local customs, it might help. Local customs are an 'approved lubricant,' and their breach an unnecessary bit of grit in the works."--Bill G., Glasgow

* * *

"Our Group grows each year. The most wonderful thing in my recovery has been to watch new ones come in like I was--afraid, sick, bewildered, desperate.

"Then as dry weeks pass they blossom like spring flowers. A spark of humor comes back, finally there's an occasional laugh, their eyes get brighter and finally there is hope instead of that dreadful shadow of fear.

"Their dress is better; they take pride in being clean and tidy; and self-respect is restored. Jobs come along, families are reunited and happy. Then comes the great day when they chair a meeting and really feel a part of A.A. for life. These are the things that make it all worthwhile.

"Kindest regards to you all away up there from all of us down at the bottom of the world. We're on top, though, when it comes to happiness and peace of mind. Cheerio." -- George B., Lower Hutt, New Zealand.

A.A. TOUR

WIESBADEN, GERMANY—“It’s great to watch A.A. history being made and to participate in it. At the 12th European Roundup the German Groups decided to set up their own central service office soon. Frank and Prue (England) were here; Ann and Beany (New York); Dr. Jim and Martha (Atlanta); Rolf (Berlin); Harry (Bad Reichenhall); and Spanish alkie representing 13 Spanish Groups arrived at the train station speaking no German but rushing around shouting “A.A.” to find their greeter! Thanks to all of you at G.S.O. for all you did, . . . I envy you the positions of trust you hold within the Fellowship.”—George G.

VICTORIA, B.C., CANADA—(The following letter was addressed to one of the G.S.O. Staff.) “As you are the honorary princess of the White Waters I am going to tell you a story bordering on the fantastic. The Penelakut Indian Group started in June, now has 32 sober members. They went to the Ahousat Reservation, where 212 came to a meeting, 103 joined. A Catholic priest wants me to travel Northwest to start Groups. Two nuns have gone North with pamphlets and a Big Book. . . Maybe the Indians will get the country back, Princess White Water, through A.A.”—Jimmy W.

MONCK’S CORNER, S.C.—“As with many Groups it appears there must be one person to do all the chores. That fell to my lot and I did not object, but

when I had to be out of town, the very few members simply stopped showing up for meetings. I would like your advice.”
—Viv I.

CADELL, SOUTH AUSTRALIA—“We received the literature and the Directory, thank you. Now we are waiting for the tapes to come by surface mail. Must be lady tapes, always late!”—Aleck.

MIAMI, FLA.—“We have started classes on the ‘12 Concepts of Service.’ Attendance is growing. Both old and new members are really interested. Seven Groups were represented last night.”—Evelyn S.

SEOUL, KOREA—“The pamphlet ‘This is A.A.’ is being translated for us by a Korean minister for our small Group of Korean A.A.’s (97 members!).”

Ed. note—That pamphlet is also now available in Zulu.

CANDELARIA DE LA FRONTERA, EL SALVADOR—“Before I arrived I wrote my brother that I wanted him to have ready two alcoholics who wanted to quit drinking. Exactly my first night there my surprise was immense when I saw not two, but ten poor devils. They didn’t know that here in our program we love more the still sick alcoholic than the one already in the program. For four wonderful days I was not able to sleep because of the great emotion.”—Abel.



FOR INSTITUTIONS

“The Grapevine” has some old back issues they’ll happily send to Groups in institutions if you ask for them.

Also—the old edition of the Big Book, “Alcoholics Anonymous,” is available for institutions at three for \$5.00.

‘TIME’ WELL DONE

“Even though I’m still in prison I have peace of mind and plenty to look forward to on my release. My wife says if all I’ve got out of three years here is sobriety, she reckons it’s time well spent.

“We are the only prison Group in New Zealand to send inside members to outside meetings without any escort from prison officers, just outside A.A. members.

“These fellows really use up A.A. literature. Could you possibly send over some to replace our diminishing stock? At present I am unable to offer any financial aid to you in exchange, but in another year I can, so if you can put my account aside until then. . .” —G.W., New Plymouth, N.Z.

Would you like enough

EXCHANGE BULLETINS for everyone in your Group?



For the first time, THE A.A. EXCHANGE BULLETIN (7 issues a year) is now available at bulk rates for Groups, as follows:

10 copies each issue	\$ 2.50
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